

SEOUL'S BEST BULGOGI

Foodies from Japan, Korea and China scour Seoul for the best bulgogi in the city

'WANNA SEE A DEAD BODY?'

Groove Korea's exclusive interview with 'Pitch Perfect' standout Hana Mae Lee

DAEGU'S DELIGHTS

Our publisher's selection of the best eats his city has to offer

Groove is Korea's English magazine for Insight, Culture, Dining, Destinations and Community

GROOVE

KOREA • Issue 77, March 2013

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IS KOREA'S **EFL** EDUCATION FAILING?

GIVEN THE MASSIVE NUMBER OF HOURS AND AMOUNT OF MONEY
SPENT ON STUDYING ENGLISH, IT'S TIME TO ASK
THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

GET OUT OF JAIL FREE

Lee Myung-bak's last gesture as president: forgiving 55 people who had broken the law

TABOOS AND TATTOOS

Modern society is growing less intolerant of this art form, and Seoul Ink is in the thick of it

LONELIEST GRAVEYARD ON EARTH

A few kilometers from the DMZ, a monk upkeeps a burial ground for North Korean soldiers

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Kala Séraphin is a noted belly dancer and writer whose vivacious spirit has brightened the Seoul arts community for the four years that she has been here. Kala joins Artist's Journey's Wilfred Lee to talk about her winding path around the world, what inspires her in Seoul, and where she is heading next.

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Seoul's best bulgogi

To find the best sushi, bulgogi, and sweet and sour pork, Groove Korea tagged along with foodies from Japan, Korea and China as they scoured Seoul for their respective country's best eats. This month we're on the hunt for Seoul's best bulgogi.

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Parting words from Urbs

My time in Korea is slowly coming to an end, and with it my time with Groove. I wanted to leave with a few tips to make everyone here — those who have just arrived as well as the lifers — more successful in the kitchen. These are just a few things that have helped me immensely during my time in Korea. I hope they help you.

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I set forth on a recent trip to Kyoto: My mission was to demonstrate how much can be seen, eaten and accomplished in less than 24 hours.

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If the concept of a leisurely walk seemed foreign when I first moved to Italy, my move to Korea made me feel even further removed from the peaceful tradition. A leisurely stroll with frequent stops around 6 p.m. in downtown Seoul might get you mowed over by fellow pedestrians or earn you a sharp elbow to the ribs.

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Is this the best chicken in Seoul?

The "Coco" in many Hispanic countries is the name given to an irrational fear, equivalent to the boogeyman. In Korea, it is simply a place to get the best fried chicken in the city.

A black and white fashion advertisement for Givenchy. The image features a woman with long, wavy blonde hair, wearing dark, rectangular sunglasses. She is looking slightly to her left. She is wearing a dark, sleeveless dress with a high, ruffled collar and a large, draped ruffle on the right side. The background is a solid, light gray. The word "GIVENCHY" is printed in white, uppercase letters across the lower middle of the image.

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Connecting Communities

Introducing some of the editors,
writers and photographers behind March's issue.



Dean Crawford

U.K.

Dean watches a lot of films, which, roughly translated, means he's a bit of a geek and spends a lot of time in dark rooms. He's from London, where he worked in the film industry, spending time on the sets of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" and "X-Men: First Class," among others. He is currently based in Jeonju. Dean contributes the monthly Korean DVD Corner and At the Box Office columns.

Robyn Durdy

U.K.

Robyn is a journalism graduate from the north-west of England who got bitten by the travel bug when she was 18. She has worked two summers in Greece, a month in South Africa and in 2012 did a volunteer project with elephants in Thailand. Since graduating, Robyn has been visiting as many countries as possible and writing about it along the way. This month she contributed her copy editing skills to Groove Korea.



Claire Jung

Korea

Claire likes eating and enjoys the challenge of finding a good restaurant. She has worked at Groove Korea since graduating university and completed a year of school in Shanghai. Her pet peeve is people listening to music without headphones on the subway. She was a collaborator on the article "Seoul's best bulgogi" in this month's issue.



Daniel Sanchez

Colombia

Daniel is a graphic artist and typographer, born and raised in South America. Daniel enjoys playing music, letting loose at the noraebang and visiting jazz cafes. He loves sports, mini-golf and hunting for ethnic food venues. He is a visual arts graduate student and Groove Korea's art director.



Jenny Na

U.S.

Jenny is a Korean adoptee with an interest in human rights and social justice issues. Outside of that, she's in the kitchen making blended beverages, in the yoga studio, at the pool, or at the computer planning her next trip to oceans near and far. Jenny is our Community Editor.



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Must Reads

The loneliest graveyard on Earth

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Just a few kilometers from the Demilitarized Zone, South Korean monk Mukgyegeosa recites Buddhist scriptures for the spirits of deceased North Korean soldiers. This place is the only graveyard in the South for dead communist soldiers, and Mukgyegeosa has invited the scorn of Korean conservatives for renovating it.



Get out of jail free

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Lee Myung-bak's last grand gesture as president was an act of mercy: the forgiveness of 55 people who had broken the laws of this land. Unfortunately, some were old friends: brown envelope-loving politicians, and dodgy businesspeople who had been part of the Blue House nexus. Friendship, it seems, is more powerful than legacy.



Is Korea's EFL education failing?

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Parents, teachers and education critics say that something in the system isn't working. Now the future of thousands of native English teachers hangs in limbo as schools begin phasing them out, and the enduring battle between public and private education is arguably deepening the "English divide." So where did it all go wrong?



Tattoos take hold as stigmas fade

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Tattooing gets scant recognition as a form of art in Korea. The reasons for this are complex, stemming from long-held traditions and the unfortunate associations with tattoos that have evolved through history. That's starting to change and Seoul Ink is right in the thick of things. "We value art over money," said owner Kil Jun.



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Becoming Bruce Lee

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{ Imaging Week 2013 }

On the cover: Is EFL failing?

Given the massive number of hours and amount of money spent on studying English, it's time to ask the tough questions.

See the full story on Page 30



Cover design by Daniel Sanchez

To contact Groove Korea for advertising, submissions or general comments, please email: info@groovekorea.com.

Our past three issues:



February 2013

Get down to business, How the liberals blew it, The first Korean-American



January 2013

12 flights for under \$500, The 'impossible' rise of Korea, Stretch your potential



December 2012

Korean pilgrimage diaries, Christmas dinner in Korea, Breathtaking destinations



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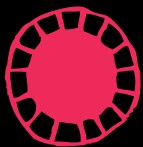
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Re: 'The first Korean-American,' by Walter J. Stucke (in February)

It seems there are different opinions as to what this person accomplished. Some say he left Korea and did very little for Korea. He was so determined to fit in (that) he spoke no Korean in America such that when he returned to Korea he had to have a translator. It's difficult to know what is fact and what is over the top embellishment. You have to be very careful what is spoken around in Korean circles. Some people deserve way more credit than they are getting and some take way more credit than they deserve.

— William

Re: 'Wading through shallow waters,' by Sabrina Hill (in January)

After gaining a graduate degree on North Korea studies and visiting the country on a couple of occasions, I'm aware of the problems mentioned by the author above and can't emphasize enough the urgency that is needed in providing care for the people of North Korea. I can vividly picture the woman mentioned by the author and it breaks my heart when I think about the divided families living a life, simply longing for their loved ones.

However, I personally can't help feel that these balloon launches potentially do more harm than good. Socks may be a nominal item to a person in the South, but when you can allegedly negotiate your way out of a country at times for a pack of cigarettes or a minimal amount of foreign currency, it's clear that something like this could cause pandemonium. Socks in North Korea, as mentioned, are bartered and, as essentials in the harsh winter, items that would be desired by many.

Pardon the analogy, but when you look at the aid that is passed out in Africa, it is not put in balloons and dropped randomly. It is systematically passed out on a needs basis. This, of course, is not possible in North Korea, but can you imagine the mayhem in Africa if aid was randomly dropped into villages at the end of the month? We would know about it because it would be reported on. We have no idea what harm this could do to a person or people who stumble upon it with the authorities or people in "survival mode" trying to stay alive having conflict with one another.

The author creates a genuine sentiment and the defector has pure soul in his actions, but both cannot understand the issues on that particular side of the border, especially if he was from close to the Yalu River area where he escaped from (hundreds of kilometers Paju/Gaesong).

In recent months, a soldier escaped to the South by killing two guards on patrol with him. Why? Because he was hungry. Could something like this happen over a pair of socks? In a country where confirmed cases of cannibalism have become rampant because of a lack of food, you decide.

I am not saying this is a negative action — clearly the possibility of North Korean people benefiting from this is apparent and hopefully it sets the seeds of an independent mentality for the future. However, there is a shroud of doubt over this activity even though there are many positive reasons for doing this. The hope that these reach "a child walking along a barren country road" is idealistic and what is not attached to this scenario is the hope that the child is not accosted by the military. That the child is not scolded by her parents by bringing a potential burden on her family and so on. These are "ifs," but so is the former.

Finally, please look at the greater good. I would much rather that efforts be focused on pressuring governments to further support legitimate NGOs who have people on the ground there, and hope that the aid that is so desperately needed reaches the people before another generation is wiped out.

To be honest, this is as idealistic as what the author says, but this will save lives in the long run — not provide hope in the short term.

— Anonomous



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BACK TO SCHOOL

MORE STUDENTS GO ABROAD TO BOOST EDUCATIONAL CV

Reflecting the rising demand for competitive degree programs and a more diverse college experience, more Korean students choose overseas options for college education.

Some 164,169 high schoolers went abroad in 2011, a 30 percent increase compared to 2006, according to data from the Korean Educational Development Institute, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the National Institute for International Education, and the Bank of Korea.

With Korean students making up a greater share of applicants to foreign universities, admissions standards have gotten stringent as well.

The change is certainly reflected in the greater emphasis put on GPA, SAT scores, AP classes and extracurricular activities, as well as foreign languages, not including Korean and English.

"Throughout high school, I took 12 AP courses and the university (only) qualified 10 out of 12 (to count toward the degree)," said Woo Jong-yu, a student at Daewon Foreign Language High School who was recently admitted to Johns Hopkins University. "I studied at private academies to pass the exams. It was a good way to impress the colleges. But some of my friends took more (AP classes) than me."

As if the process wasn't competitive enough, other skill sets or extracurricular activities are also taken into consideration. Being fluent in foreign languages is a boost in the admissions process. Some middle school students have already begun preparations by taking up second foreign languages in school.

"Being fluent in Spanish or other languages is helpful in getting admitted to prestigious universities like Yale," said Lee Seong-bum, a 7th grader currently studying Spanish. Some extracurricular activities like cooking, in addition to being helpful in admissions, can lead to unique college options like the so-called further education or continuing education. Westminster Kingsway College in London offers renowned culinary courses. It can offer great vocational training opportunities for students who desire a more practical education.

"I foresee that the world is only going to get smaller. I mean, just look at the global sensation rapper Psy!" said Kim Ji-hoon, a 10th grade student at Cheongshim International Academy.

To attract students looking to get a more international education, some colleges in Korea have created departments emulating foreign universities, dubbed the Division of International Studies.

"Adroit language skills, especially English, naturally lead to broader opportunities and a variety of career options," said Kim Mun-ja, an official at the DIS of Hanyang University. "This certainly is a merit for the students, and I think students prefer the DIS and going abroad to study because of this benefit."

But setbacks do exist. The cost involved is a substantial financial burden for parents. Yoon Jeong-hwa, the mother of a child who wants to attend a university in New York, said she's been saving up to prepare for the responsibility. "Even though my husband and I both work, the costs are a heavy burden. On average, my husband and I would have to send \$50,000 to my child annually," she said.

HAGWON SPENDING DROPS ON AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Spending on private education for elementary school students dropped last year mainly due to increased participation in public after-school programs, while expenses increased for those in middle and high schools, government data showed in February.

According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Statistics Korea, the monthly average of private education spending per elementary school student last year was 219,000 won (\$201.2), a 9.1 percent drop from the previous year.

Monthly average spending for middle and high school students, however, went up 5.3 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively, over the same period, amounting to 276,000 won and 224,000 won.

The Education Ministry pointed out that the drop in private education spending for students in elementary school is mainly due to more participation in government-supported after-school programs.

"The participation rate of after-school programs offered by elementary schools is going up mainly because there has been a significant improvement in the quantity and quality of programs being offered," said Shin Ik-hyun, a director general at the ministry.

"The demand for private education, which so far has been largely fulfilled by hagwon (private academies) or personal tutoring, is being absorbed into schools."

Last year, 52.6 percent of elementary school students took part in after-school activities, according to the ministry, which is 2.2 percentage points higher than the previous year. In middle and high schools, however, ministry officials note that after-school programs have not settled sufficiently enough to absorb students' demand for private education.

Last year, fewer students in middle and high schools took part in after-school classes that offer lectures on subjects related to university admissions, such as mathematics and English. According to ministry figures, the participation rate dropped four to eight percentage points last year compared to 2011.

The state figures are based on a survey of 78,000 students in nationwide elementary, middle and high schools, as well as their parents.

Survey results showed that Korean parents spent a total of 19 trillion won on their children's private education in 2012.

It is the first time that the volume has remained below 20 trillion won since 2007 when the survey was first adopted.

The average monthly spending on private education per student was 236,000 won, 6,000 won less than when the spending reached its highest point in 2009.

Reflecting price fluctuation, the Education Ministry said the overall monthly expense dropped by 34,000 won over the past three years.

Spending on after-school programs was not included in the total tally of the survey, but monthly spending was 13,000 won per student last year, which is 2,000 won less than the previous year.

"Financial support given by regional education offices to students in after-school programs increased (last year)," said Choi Soo-jin, a director at the Education Ministry.

FOREIGN PLAYERS FACE RACIAL ABUSE

Even though many foreign players pursue their football careers in Korea, the society is still facing difficulty in accepting foreign players.

In April, Adilson dos Santos or "Adi," FC Seoul's Brazilian defender, became the victim of racially abusive words written online by a user who posed as a Le Coq Sportif designer, the brand in charge of creating advertisements featuring Adi.

The alleged designer wrote, "Adi is still a used coal briquette even if he uses make-up." After an investigation, Le Coq Sportif announced that no employee in the company had written the post.

Lee Chung-sung's experience in Korea is another example of discrimination in the country's football league. Currently England Premier League Southampton's striker and a member of Japan Interna-

tional, Lee is a Korean-Japanese who played for Korea until 2004. In an MBC special interview in 2010, the 28-year-old said he felt discriminated against by his Korean teammates after being called "half-jj-eokbbari," an epithet against Zainichi Koreans.

Lee said: "It disrupted my mind to even think that my career could possibly end in one or two years. I suddenly felt a sense of emptiness of the way I view the world."

There is a player who once tried to become a naturalized Korean: Enio Oliveira Junior, or Eninho, of Jeonbuk FC. Last year, he was about to become a member of the Korean International team by the proposal of the KFA and Choi Kang-hee, the current manager of the national squad.

However, the Korea Sports Council strongly re-

jected the suggestion, calling Eninho ineligible for the spot. The council's official statement said that a player who lacks knowledge about Korean culture and can't blend into a team of Koreans should not represent the country. While the council approved the naturalization of players in other sports like basketball and volleyball, it did not allow any in football.

In an interview with the Korea JoongAng Daily, Han Sang-woo, the KFA's chief executive of advertisement and marketing, said black Brazilian players like Adi are especially discriminated against.

Han emphasized that people must evaluate players by their skills, not by ethnicity.

"Our league wouldn't have succeeded without the devotion of foreign players," he explained.

JAPANESE BOYCOTT ORGANIZED

Local merchants including restaurants and small supermarket owners declared in late February they would not sell Japanese products as a protest against the annual Takeshima Day event held in Japan on Feb. 22.

Takeshima is Japan's name for Dokdo. Shimane Prefecture held the event honoring the islets that was attended by a record number of Japanese lawmakers and a vice-ministerial government official, Aiko Shimajiri.

The annual event is intended to strengthen Japan's territorial claims to the Dokdo islets.

It was the first time a central government official attended it. Shimane Prefecture designated Feb. 22 as Takeshima Day in 2005.

The Save Local Stores Alliances, supported by 140 civic groups and associations of merchants including the Korea Foodservice Industry Association and the Korea Internet-PC Culture Association said yesterday they will not sell Japanese

products such as Mild Seven cigarettes or Asahi Beer in their stores and also won't buy other goods made by Japanese companies like Nikon, Toyota, Honda, Sony and Uniqlo.

About six million merchants nationwide are members of the alliances. They include restaurants, karaoke bars, small supermarkets and electronics stores. They claim to sell 80 percent of the Japanese products distributed in the country.

"We will not sell those products from Samiljeol, Independence Movement Day on March 1, until the Japanese reflect on the past sincerely and stop claiming Dokdo," said Oh Ho-suk, co-chairman of the Save Local Stores Alliances. "We will not sell Mild Sevens and Asahi beer, for we are the final seller of such products. As consumers, we'll boycott other Japanese brands."

Oh added that merchants will post stickers in their stores to notify customers of the boycott.

SON CONFESSES TO KILLING HIS FAMILY

Police said the tragic suicide of three members of a supposedly financially troubled family in Jeonju, North Jeolla, last month wasn't suicide at all, but an alleged murder plot by the family's youngest son.

And they said the son drugged himself to make it look like his family tried to pull him into their group suicide.

In February, the 24-year-old son called 119 emergency rescuers to the family's apartment in Songcheon-dong, Jeonju. They found unconscious the 52-year-old father, who was surnamed Park, the mother and an older brother, who were sent to the hospital. None survived.

The younger son told the Deokjin Police Precinct in Jeonju, "I fell asleep after I had some milk my older brother gave me. When I woke up, my house was filled with smoke, so I dialed 119 for help. My family was suffering from financial hardship."

But the police doubted the young man's story because they could find no suicide notes and details of his story kept changing. They also found that he bought coal and a burner in Palbok-dong, also in Jeonju, days before the family died.

Lab tests showed that the victims had 25 to 30 percent levels of carbon monoxide in their blood,

while the younger son only had 19.2 percent.

The police said Park confessed that he has murdered his family. The suspect admitted putting sleeping pills into a glass of bokbunja, or Korean black raspberry, juice that he gave his parent at 1 a.m. When his brother returned home at 3 a.m., he gave him a glass of spiked milk.

He then set the coal on fire in his parents' and his brother's rooms.

The police said Park tried to make the suicide look like his brother's idea. He put coal in the back of his brother's Hyundai Grandeur sedan and dressed in his brother's clothes when he did in case CCTV cameras captured his image. He also sent text messages from his brother's KakaoTalk account to his friend that read, "Live a happy life." "We assume that the suspect wanted to take the properties belonging to his parents and brother," a spokesman for the police said. "We are currently checking the family's insurance and bank accounts."

According to the police, Park made an attempt to kill his parents earlier last month by dismantling a pipe so smoke generated from the heating system would get into the apartment and kill them. That attempt failed when the parents woke up after smelling the smoke.

BROTHERS MURDERED FOR BEING 'TOO LOUD'

Thin walls and a crowded apartment proved fatal for a pair of siblings who were murdered "for being too loud" in a building in Myeonmok-dong, northeastern Seoul, by a neighbor in February.

A security guard discovered the bloody bodies of the Kim brothers lying in the snow-covered flower bed outside the building. They were pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital.

The alleged murderer immediately fled after the stabbings and is being pursued by police.

A 45-year-old man surnamed Kim who was visiting his girlfriend, a sixth-floor resident of the apartment building in Jungnang District, fatally stabbed the two brothers at about 5:40 p.m. a day ahead of the Lunar New Year.

The brothers, 33 and 31 years old and also surnamed Kim, were visiting their elderly parents' seventh-floor home. The older brother visited with his wife and 3-year-old daughter while the younger newlywed was accompanied by his wife.

Kim's girlfriend, 49-year-old Park, first called the Kim brothers' family, who lived directly above, about the noise level and loud footsteps. Kim and Park then marched upstairs to face the brothers, Park told police, leading to a squabble in the hallway.

As their altercation grew more heated, assailant Kim suggested that they take the argument outside so as to not disturb neighbors and have a "man-to-man" talk.

When the brothers appeared downstairs, Kim took them by surprise and stabbed the older brother with a knife multiple times in the face, back and side. The younger brother tried to run away before tripping over a flower bed and was stabbed multiple times.

According to the Ministry of Environment, there were 1,829 complaints lodged about noise from March to December last year.

WHAT'S ON

March 1st - March 31st

1 - Friday

Tour: Independence Day tour with Royal Asiatic Society @ Onyang Folk Museum; 8 am; raskb.com

Concert: Twenty One Pilots @ Walkerhill Theater; 66,000 won; ticket.interpark.com/Global

Concert: New Blue Death, Used Cassettes, Genius @ Powwow in Noksapyeong; 9 pm; powwowseoul.wordpress.com

2 - Saturday

Concert: Magna Fall, Siberian Husky, Darl-masansaeng @ Dokkakki Live Hall; facebook.com/dokkakki.liveclub

Clubbing: Social Underground party @ Club Exit; facebook.com/socialunderground-seoul; 11 pm

Happy Hour: Unlimited cocktails @ Big Rock in Gangnam; 15,000 won; 7-10 pm, Saturdays; bigrockbeer.co.kr

3 - Sunday

Festival: Taebaek Mountain Snow Festival @ Tae-baek-si, Gangwon-do; Through Feb. 3; festival.taebaek.go.kr

Tour: Kim Young-Jae's music studio near Hongik University with Royal Asiatic Society; raskb.com

Food: Sunday Couples Day @ Big Rock in Gangnam; 10% off with ticket stubs; bigrockbeer.co.kr

4 - Monday

Concert: Last day of Hong Kyoung-min's performance; ticket.interpark.com/Global

Food: Wing night @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong (Mondays); craftwork-staphouse.com

Concert: Lowdown 30, Gate Flowers, Hanumpa @ Club FF in Hongdae

5 - Tuesday

Food: Pasta night @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong (Tuesdays); craftwork-staphouse.com

Open house: Dulwich College is holding open house for prospective parents; Junior school (7-11); 10 am; admissions@dulwich-seoul.kr

6 - Wednesday

Class: Ceramic Handpainting @ Seorae Global Village Center; 11 am; seorae@sba.seoul.kr

Box office: "Meskada" opens in theatres nationwide

7 - Thursday

Box office: "Zero Dark Thirty" opens in theatres nationwide

Box office: "Oz: The Great and Powerful" opens in theatres nationwide



"Betrayal" hits the stage March 15-24. Read the article on Page 80.

8 - Friday

Music: K-pop Dance Class @ Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center; 4-5:30pm; RSVP seoultourism.kr; Read the article on Page 82.

Music festival: TODAY EXPRESS 2013 @ Soundholicity in Hongdae; March 8, 9, 10; ticket.interpark.com/Global

9 - Saturday

Tour: Jongmyo Shrine, Tapgol Park with Royal Asiatic Society; 1 pm; raskb.com

Class: Learn Traditional Korean Musical Instruments @ National Gugak Center; 10:30 am; register gugakwon@gmail.com

10 - Sunday

Festival: Last day of Jeongwol Daeboreum Fire Festival @ Saebyeoul Oreum, Jeju Island; March 8-10; buriburi.go.kr

Expo: Last day of the Buddhism EXPO @ SETEC; March 7-10; bexpo.kr

11 - Monday

Social: Open mic @ Tony's in Itaweon (Mondays); tonysitaewon.com

Food: Wing special @ at Yaletown in Sinchon; 10 wings for 4,000 won; facebook.com/yaletownjason; Mondays

12 - Tuesday

Class: Hanji Class @ Seorae Global Village Center; March 12, 14, 19, 21; register seorae@sba.seoul.kr

Learn about Korea's cuisine with O'ngo culinary tour of Seoul; ongofood.com

13 Wednesday

Happy Hour: 2,000 won off beer/wine @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong; 4-6 pm; craftwork-staphouse.com

Happy Hour: 3,000 won off JD, Finlanda vodka @ DOJO in Itaewon; Wednesdays

14 - Thursday

Social: Open mic @ Orange Tree in HBC (Thursdays); (02) 749-8202

Box office: "Alex Cross" opens in theatres nationwide

K-pop Dance Class @ Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center. Read the article on Page 82.



15 - Friday

Theater: Venus in Furs @ Camarata Studio: Noksapyeong; March 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 16; RSVP 010-2897-7207

Tour: Seoul International Women's Association tour of Sindang-dong; 10 am; siwapage.com

16 - Saturday

Festival: St. Patrick's Day Festival at Sindorim D-Cube. Read the article on Page 86.

Concert: Rufus Wainwright @ UNIQLO AX; 110,000 won; ticket.interpark.com/Global

17 - Sunday

Fitness: Seoul International Marathon @ Gwanghwamun; register marathon@donga.com

Ticket Tip: Go to ticket.interpark.com/Global to purchase tickets for ongoing musicals

Box office: "Warm Bodies" opens in theatres nationwide

Theater: "Betrayal" hits the stage March 15-24. Read the article on Page 80.

For suggestions or comments,
e-mail calendar@groovekorea.com

*All the events published in this calendar are subject to unforeseen changes by the promoters. Groove Korea does not take responsibility for any misunderstandings or third party damage.

18 - Monday

Food: Wing night @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong (Mondays)

Beer: 15,000 won all-you-can-drink @ Beer Garden. Renaissance Hotel; 6-9 pm (every day); (02) 2222-8630

Beer: All-you-can-drink beer @ Pho Mons in Gangnam; 4,900 won for 2 hours (every day); (02) 514-0513

19 - Tuesday

Food: Wing special @ at Yaletown in Sinchon; 10 wings for 4,000 won; facebook.com/yaletownjason; Mondays

Food: 2-For-1 fish & chips @ Wolfhound (Tuesdays); wolfhoundpub.com

Beer: 15,000 won all-you-can-drink beer @ Beer Garden, Renaissance Hotel, Gangnam (every day, 6-9 p.m.); (02) 2222-8630

20 Wednesday

Musical: "The Musical Bibap" @ Bibap Theatre in Seoul; ticket.interpark.com/Global

Social: Trivia night @ Beer O'Clock in Sinchon (Wednesdays); beeroclock.ca

Social: Quiz night @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong (Wednesdays); craftworkstaphouse.com

21 - Thursday

Box office: "The Dolphin: Story of Dreamer" opens in theatres nationwide

Box office: "Django Unchained" opens in theatres nationwide. Read the article on Page 58.



"Django Unchained" opens on March 21. Read the article on Page 58.

22 - Friday

Class: Macaron Making Class @ L'école douce, Seocho-gu; 10 am; register seorae@sba.seoul.kr

Tour: Seoul International Women's Association tour of Yonsei University; 10 am; siwapage.com

23 - Saturday

Concert: Grimes, Beat Culture, Lo-botomy @ Rolling Hall; rollinghall.co.kr/

Concert: Dok2 @ V-HALL; <http://ticket.interpark.com>

24 - Sunday

Festival: Gwangyang International Maehwa Festival @ Seomjin Village; March 23-31; gwangyang.go.kr

Musical: Last day for "The Phantom of the Opera" @ Blue Square Musical Hall; ticket.interpark.com/Global

25 - Monday

Volunteer: Senior Day Care Center with Seorae Global Village Center; 1 pm; register seorae@sba.seoul.kr

Happy hour: All-you-can-drink beer 6-8 pm; 10,000 won @ Big Rock in Gangnam; Monday, Tuesday; bigrockbeer.co.kr

Exhibit: Tim Burton exhibition @ Seoul Museum of Art; through April 14

FREE STUFF: Be the first to email the Groove crossword to mattlamers@groovekorea.com and win a 25,000 won voucher.

26 - Tuesday

Lecture: "Travelers' Tales, Or How the West Learned about Korea" with Royal Asiatic Society; 9 pm; raskb.com

Food: Pasta night @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong (Tuesdays); craftworkstaphouse.com

Food: Miniburger night at Yaletown in Sinchon; 1 free burger with a slider order; facebook.com/yaletownjason; Tuesdays

Festival: Gurye Sansuyu Festival @ Jirisan Hot Springs; March 29-March 31; sansuyu.gurye.go.kr

27 Wednesday

Concert: The Script @ UNIQLO AX; 110,000 won; ticket.interpark.com/Global

Social: Seoul International Women's Association Easter egg hunt @ Yongsan Family park; [momsandtots@siwapage.com](https://momsandtots.siwapage.com)

Happy hour: Ladies' night @ Big Rock in Gangnam; 1 free cocktail until 9 pm; Wednesdays; bigrockbeer.co.kr

Social: Standup comedy (Wednesdays) @ Tony's in Itaewon; tonysitaewon.com

28 - Thursday

Festival: Yeongdeok Snow Crab Festival @ Gangguhang Port; March 28-April 1; ydcrabfestival.com

Box office: "Pitch Perfect" opens in theatres nationwide

Box office: "G.I. Joe 2: Retaliation" opens in theatres nationwide

Happy hour: Buy one Big Rock beer-get one free @ Big Rock in Gangnam; 6-8 pm; Thursdays; bigrockbeer.co.kr

29 - Friday

Class: Origami Class @ Seorae Global Village Center; 4 pm; register seorae@sba.seoul.kr

30 - Saturday

Conference: Seoul KOTESOL Conference @ Sookmyung Women's University; koreatesol.org

31 - Sunday

Musical: Last day for "Nanta" @ Myeongdong Art Center; <http://ticket.interpark.com/Global>

St. Patrick's Day celebration on March 16. Read the article on Page 86.



ITAEWON FINDS



1

FIREBIRD TRACK
SUIT FOR CHILDREN

ADIDAS OFS STORE

Itaewon store
02.798.9977



4

THE PROST BURGER (BEEF,
CARAMELIZED ONION, BACON
AND BLUE CHEESE)

PROST

Itaewon
070.4481.0077



2

KASIMA WEDGE
SANDAL WITH REAL SUEDE

ALDO

Itaewon store
02.792.7040



3

STRAWBERRY PIE
WITH CHOCOLATE
AND CUSTARD
CREAM

TARTINE

Itaewon
02.3785.3400

5

PASTRAMI SANDWICH

SUJI'S

Itaewon
02.797.3698



CRANBERRY RICOTTA CHEESE
BAGUETTE SANDWICH

HOLLYS COFFEE

Itaewon
02.749.7803

6



7

FINEST TAILORED SUITS

SUN TAILOR

Itaewon store
02.794.0794



8

MODERNA
MS200 BY PHIATON
CONCIERGE

Itaewon store
02.796.3599



9

LARGE TIN
WITH 8 COOKIES

BEN'S COOKIES

Itaewon
02-556-3275



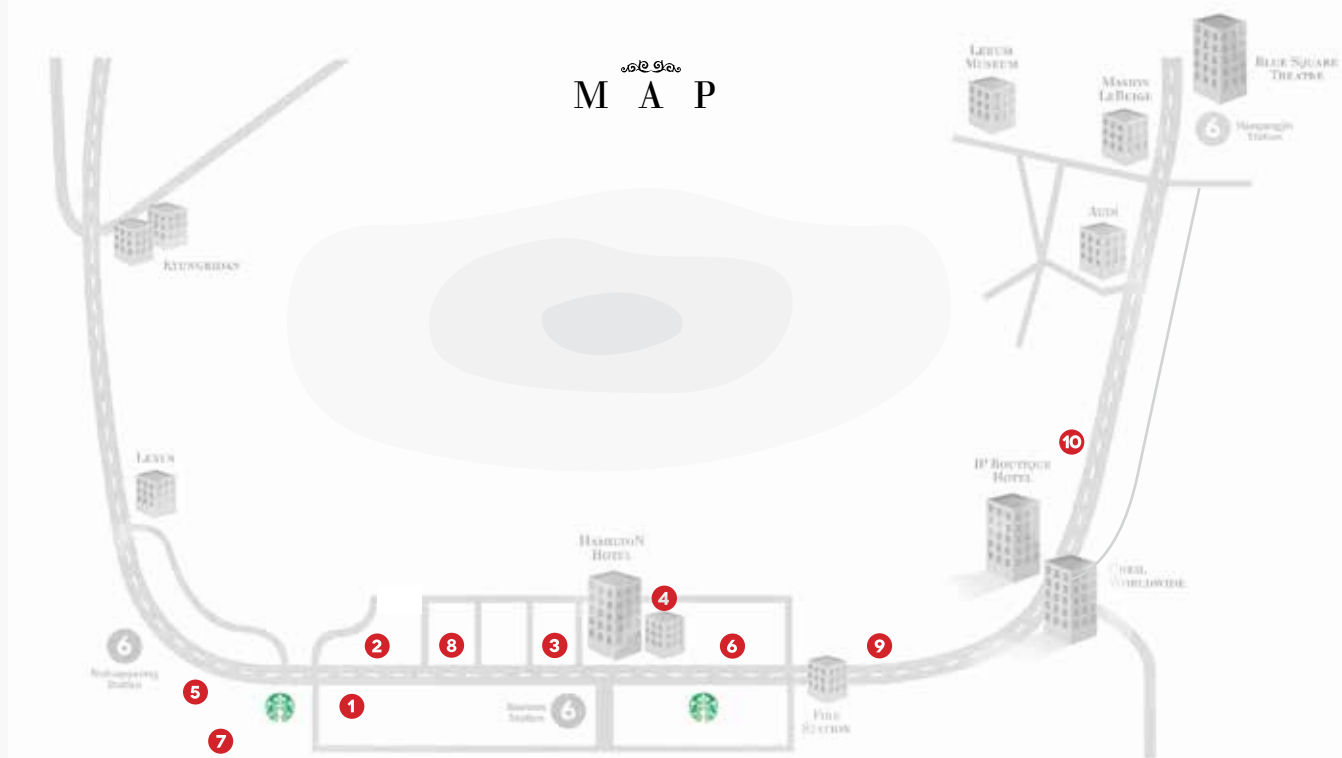
10

BOY BY BAND OF
OUTSIDERS DOUBLE
TRENCH COAT

BEAKER

Hannam flagship store
070.4118.5216

지도
M A P



GAROSUGIL FINDS



1 COLLAR POINT
FANCY SHORT JUMPER
8 SECONDS

Garosugil
070.7090.1144



2 HEALTHY
BIBIMBAP WITH SALADS
BIBIGO

Garosugil
02.544.7423



3 LACE UP LOAFER
WITH NEON
COLOR SOLE
FOREVER 21

Garosugil
02.6928.8729-31



5 TOKYO RINGO
(APPLE WITH CUSTARD CREAM)
TOKYO PANYA

02.547.7790



BOUQUET OF
MULTI-COLORED
FLOWERS
**LONDON
FLOWER &
GARDEN**

Garosugil store
02.546.9070

6 CERAMIC OWL
OBJET (DECORATIONS)
TEAL TABLE GALLERY

Garosugil
02.544.7936



EXCURSION CANDLE
COLLECTION BY ARCHIPELAGO
BOTANICALS
ABOUT A.

Garosugil
02.3445.3817



8

GUILTY SET (3 JANE SIZE PIZZAS + 1 BEVERAGE)
JANE'S PICKY PIZZA

02.542.5354



9

MARTINI
SHAKEN OR
STIRRED
**MARTINI
KITCHEN**

Garosugil
02.547.7792

10

DOUBLE ZIP BAG MATT
COATED SPOT NAVY
CATH KIDSTON

Garosugil
02.3445.4658



MAP





THE LONELIEST GRAVEYARD ON EARTH

South Korean monk upkeep burial ground for deceased North Korean soldiers

Story and Photos by Matthew Lamers

“At least half a million young soldiers were killed. I think that before we talk about peace with North Korea or China, we ought to comfort the war dead and reconcile their spirits on the centennial anniversary.” — Mukgyegeosa

● It was an autumn dawn, and the spirits of deceased soldiers filled every corner of monk Mukgyegeosa's mountainside temple grounds. Some among them were crying, demanding and angry. Some had their heads blown off. Others sat with severed limbs. All wore battered North Korean and Chinese military uniforms. The young men were bloodied and destroyed by war. They talked to each other and even engaged Mukgyegeosa. Some complained of the cold, he said, while others complained of hunger. One simply wanted to go home. Another man told Mukgyegeosa he missed his mother.

They were at his temple in the South Korean village Nulo-ri, about 10 kilometers from the North Korean border, to appeal for his help. They begged, threatened and demanded.

It started at 3:30 a.m. on Oct. 15, 2011. The monk was in the middle of the first of three daily prayer sessions, called yebul. He had been a monk for 16 years and said he hadn't been ready for the dozens of dead soldiers who wandered about his lawn that morning. He was terrified and bewildered. He rejected their appeals, telling them: “I'm not ready for this. I don't want it. Why me? It's not my responsibility.” They left.

Just 15 minutes away is the little-known, nearly forgotten burial ground where the deceased Communist soldiers were laid to rest after the 1950-1953 Korean War ended in a ceasefire. It is in the village Jeokseong-myeon Dapgok-ri, in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, and Mukgyegeosa's is the nearest temple.

In 2011, the place was more peaceful than eerie; rice paddies rest in the shallow valley below and tall trees sway in the sky above. It's always quiet. The frozen Imjin River that divides the Koreas is two kilometers away. Single white sticks poked out of the ground demarking some 1,100 gravesites, rising from small mounds of earth. The sticks are neither labeled with name, nationality nor rank; only the province in which the body was found. More than 200,000 North

Korean soldiers lost their lives — an unknown number south of the 38th parallel — but this is the only known resting place for them in South Korea.

He was particularly interested in why the spirits had been appearing to him. Mukgyegeosa first visited the graveyard in 2011 after doing some research. His first impression was desolation and despair. He found it in neglect — just the state in which you would probably expect to find a graveyard filled with enemy soldiers.

Mukgyegeosa said bad things started happening. He fell ill. Though his doctor told him nothing was wrong, Mukgyegeosa had no appetite or energy. The family that owned the land his temple sat on asked him to leave because they wanted to raze it for commercial development. The family's relatives had built the temple in about 60 years ago, but the new generation was more interested in cashing in on a local real estate boom. (Other residing monks fled after the Chinese and North Korean spirits appeared.) More than 100 workers, accompanied by 250 police officers, descended on the village.

After Mukgyegeosa stood his ground, the family's three representatives suffered a spell of misfortune. One fell into a coma after a car accident; another lost his job; the third went bankrupt and fled overseas. Remaining family members called off the demolition.

There was no exact day when Mukgyegeosa made it his mission to help the spirits of the dead soldiers, but he has since dedicated his life to assisting them. He said they wore him down, essentially leaving him with no choice. “I couldn't refuse because they would appear every time I prayed.”

Mukgyegeosa's work in Jeokseong-myeon Dapgok-ri is not uncontroversial. Since his story broke in the Korean press — and later in the New York Times — conservative opponents have lined up against him, including the Korean



PERIOD OF PRAYER

On Feb. 1, 2012, Mukgyegeosa set out on a 108-day period of prayer. At first, he sensed both a welcoming and unwanted feeling from the spirits. The number 108 is important in Buddhism. Buddhists believe that all people experience 108 periods of anguish in their lifetime, and bowing 108 times is said to free one of his anguish.



War Veterans Association and a number of right-wing groups. In an era of worsening inter-Korean relations, he has been criticized for "aiding the enemy." When he started upkeep on the site, tensions still ran high from North Korea's deadly attack on a South Korean warship 19 months prior. One month later North Korea shelled Yeonpyeong Island with a barrage of artillery. Four people died, including two civilians. The deeply impoverished state detonated a third nuclear device last month in a show of force against newly imposed sanctions slapped on it after a successful long-range missile test in December.

"To those who question why I comfort the dead even though they were the enemy, I make three points," he said. First, real warriors show respect to the enemy after the battle. Second, Eastern culture "doesn't judge 'right' or 'wrong' after death." Third, while in the West a century is 100 years, Mukgye-geosa said an Asian century lasts 60 years. This year marks one Asian century since the 1953 armistice put an end to the Korean War.

On Feb. 1, 2012, Mukgyegeosa set out on a 108-day period of prayer. At first, he sensed both a welcoming and unwanted feeling from the spirits. The



There was no exact day when Mukgyegeosa made it his mission to help the spirits of the dead soldiers, but he has since dedicated his life to assisting them.

number 108 is important in Buddhism. Buddhists believe that all people experience 108 periods of anguish in their lifetime, and bowing 108 times is said to free one of this anguish.

He would go twice daily — at 11 in the morning and again at 11 at night. When he started reading the Amitageong (Buddhist scriptures), clear skies would give way to dark clouds. It got cold. Sometimes it started raining. It was physically taxing, he said, because of the bad weather. That occurred for some 40 days.

One day it all changed. If the weather had been poor, it would improve by the time he was finished praying. Mukgyegeosa felt no sense of rejection. “People who came to the graveyard with me noticed the bizarre weather changes, too. After people experienced those strange events, I started receiving more support. I also had more confidence in what I was doing.” On the 108th day there was a big celebration. Also on the 108th day the Korean War Dead for North Korean and Chinese Peace was formed. It now consists of 120 people.

It's the second day of the year of the snake, minus 10 degrees Celsius. Mukgyegeosa begins by offering rice cakes, fruit and makgeolli to the restless spirits. He says he does this because the soldiers here died hungry and cold. His supporters donated the food and the money needed for it. The ceremony begins when Mukgyegeosa chants the Amitageong.

The chanting is a kind of calling for the spirits to be reborn in another life, presumably in a better place. The spirits still linger here, Mukgyegeosa said, because they are discontent, but adds that some have moved on since he started performing the Buddhist ceremonies and looking after the cemetery. Mukgyegeosa moves deliberately around the graveyard,

stopping intermittently at the 1,100 grave markers, reciting Buddhist scriptures and banging on his moktak, a fish-shaped wooden instrument designed for such rituals. After an hour, the ceremony is complete.

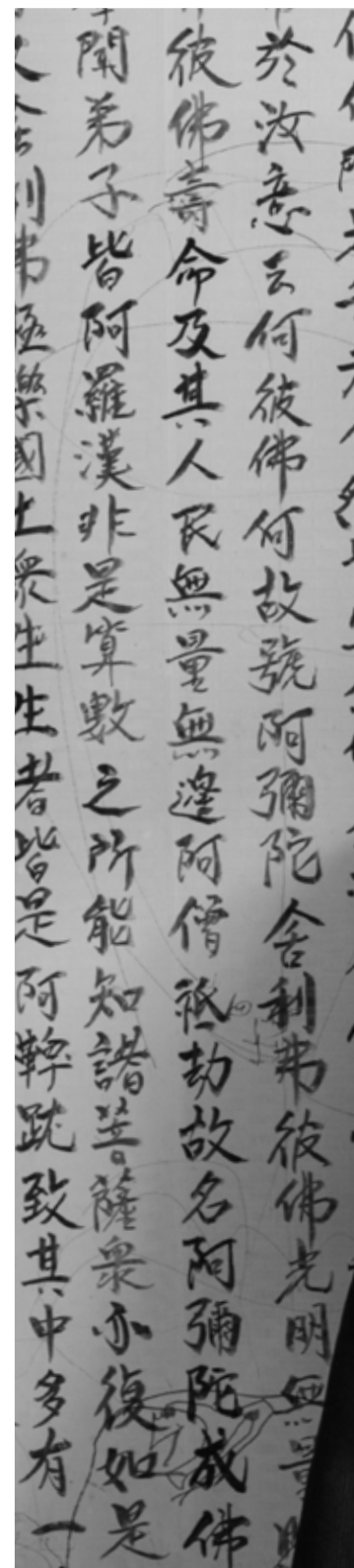
Mukgyegeosa has put a lot of work into this place. With donations from supporters, he has installed lighting, staircases and even replaced the wooden grave markers with small marble slabs.

His gesture hasn't gone unnoticed by some of the families in China who have long mourned their missing sons. A couple of Chinese people visited the graveyard in the spring of 2012 after finding out about it through the media, they said. Mukgyegeosa said they were gracious to him for doing something no one else was willing to do. Five people from Hangzhou, China, visited later in April.

Mukgyegeosa said he has changed a lot of minds, but that there is still a lot of work to be done. He is currently arranging to build another temple, one dedicated to assisting the spirits of deceased soldiers. A local businessman is willing to donate a plot of land north of the Civilian Control Line.

“Then, I think human nature isn't too bad,” he said. “They have sympathy for others.

“Death is the end and the beginning,” he added. “At least half a million young soldiers were killed. I think that before we talk about peace with North Korea or China, we ought to comfort the war dead and reconcile their spirits on the centennial anniversary.”



TOP LEFT:
FIRESTORM

Mukgyegeosa has drawn a lot of criticism from Korean conservatives for what they perceive as “aiding the enemy.”



TOP MIDDLE
HAUNTED

Mukgyegeosa said he has communicated with dozens of spirits of dead Chinese and North Korean soldiers.

ABOVE
OVERHAUL

The monk Mukgyegeosa has put a lot of work into this place. With donations from supporters, he has installed lighting, staircases and even replaced the old wooden grave markers with small marble slabs. There are even bathrooms. What was a decrepit graveyard last summer is now fully renovated and ready for visitors.

IS KOREA'S EFL EDUCATION FAILING?

Given the massive number of hours and amount of money spent on studying English, it's time to ask the tough questions

Story by Elaine Ramirez / Photos by Romin Lee Johnson

● Kelly Choi is an 11-year-old entering fourth grade in Seoul's Gangnam district. She spends some 10 hours studying in seven English classes every week — more than three-fourths the class time of all her other subjects combined, not counting homework.

Statistically, Kelly (her English name) is behind her classmates. She began studying English in first grade, but half her Gangnam peers started before kindergarten. And when they get to middle and high school, they will spend more than 15,000 hours studying the language.

"I want her to go to university in the U.S.," said her mother, Kim Hyun-hee. "It looks nice and I want her mind to be expanded, if her ability is acceptable."

The demand is unmistakable: Parents want the best for their kids, and for Kim, learning English is the "bridge" to success. Some students are driven to study English to experience the world, while others just hope their high English scores will help them get into a famous university and land a job at one of Korea's big-name chaebol companies.

"The idea of being a salaryman and working for giant conglomerates is pretty ingrained in a lot of people's minds in Korea," said Douglas Lee, a native English teacher in Seoul. "Call it the Korean dream. Koreans who are fluent in English are a valuable commodity and they know it. They have an edge in getting a good job."

That "Korean dream" leads taxpayers and parents to spend more per capita on English than any other country, but despite it all, the country overall ranks middle of the pack globally, and lower in English proficiency levels than countries in much of Asia and Western Europe. And while overall education spending on the subject has hardly abated, the country's world ranking has even slid over the years.

Policymakers have tried many ways to boost English education: employing Southeast Asians, luring pricey native English teachers from the West and even utilizing robot teachers to fill the role. But in almost a decade of struggles over discrimination, classroom conditions and teacher quality, those projects have begun to backtrack, fizzled out or never gotten off the ground to begin with.

Parents, teachers and education critics alike say that something in the system isn't working. Now the future of thousands of native English teachers hangs in limbo as schools begin phasing them out, and the enduring battle between public and private education is arguably deepening the "English divide," which observers say hurts lower-income students' opportunities to move up the social ladder.

So where did it all go wrong?

Truth in numbers

Is public EFL education set up to fail?

Despite the government spending hundreds of billions of won a year on English education and students spending trillions more at private academies, the country's global standing in proficiency of the language has fallen: It ranked 13th in 2009 on an independent ranking called the English Proficiency Index, but fell to 21st of the 54 countries assessed in 2011. Another ranking even rated Koreans as the worst communicators in English among 12 Asian countries.

Korea spends more per capita on English education than any other country, according to a study attributed to the Canadian government. Samsung Economic Research Institute estimated that Koreans, who make up nearly 1 in 5 TOEFL test takers worldwide, spent a total of 14.3 trillion won (\$13.1 billion) a year on private English tutoring, and another 700 billion won a year applying for English proficiency tests in 2005. Together, this 15 trillion won accounted for 1.9 percent of the country's GDP that year — compared to the estimated 5 trillion won spent by Japanese students of English.

Moreover, Korean students spend an estimated average of 15,548 hours studying English from middle school to high school alone — not counting elementary school or earlier. That number is comparable to that of Denmark, whose students attain high English proficiency by ninth grade. Half of the students in Gangnam, the wealthiest district in Korea, start studying English before they even reach elementary school, according to the Korea Development Institute, a state-run think tank.



HAGWON MANIA

ABOVE
LATE NIGHT

A group of students heads home after studying at a private academy. Korean students spend an estimated average of 15,548 hours studying English from middle school to high school alone — not counting elementary school or earlier. Public data says nearly 70 percent of students went to hagwon last year.



ABOVE
HEADED HOME

A student goes home after a long day at a hagwon. The number of language academies more than doubled to 17,053 schools in 2009 from 2005.

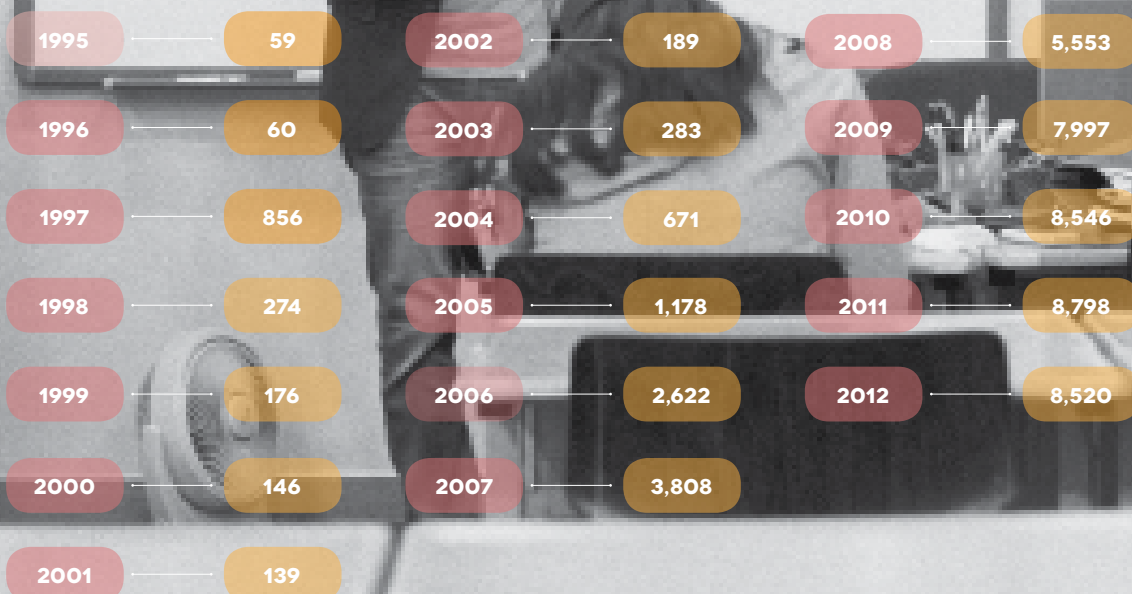
RIGHT
A PRIVILEGE

A student takes notes at a hagwon. The wealthiest families spend 10 times more on private education than those in the lowest income bracket, according to the Korea Development Institute.



NETs IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(As of Dec. 31, 2012)



"An over-emphasis on rote learning, relatively low levels of exposure to foreigners in everyday life, and teacher-student norms which impede conversation practice all contribute to the problem," said a report by Education First, which ranks the English Proficiency Index, adding that the English level among Korean adults is below the average of Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development member states.

Critics argue that the public English program is set up to fail. Teachers and parents find textbooks inadequate, class sizes too big, and class times too short to have productive lessons.

Ms. H, a Korean elementary school teacher in Gyeonggi Province for about 14 years, complains that the textbook she uses isn't good enough. She said that the curriculum doesn't address all four language-learning essentials: reading, writing, listening and speaking. She believes the program has improved little since her days as a student, partly because the shift in curriculum — from reading and grammar to listening and speaking — is still imbalanced.

"I think these days Korean people say we cannot speak English very well because we just learned about grammar, but I think grammar is also important. They have to teach four skills, not only grammar," added Ms. H, who teaches classes ranging in size from 30 to 35 students. "I think (the main problem is that) they have no chance to speak English and (teachers) don't need to speak English."

Paul Jambor, a Korea University assistant professor specializing in English for academic purposes, believes the Confucian hierarchy of respect that is so ingrained in Korea's education system is not conducive to communication-based learning — and teachers' and students' hesitance to break from this will continue to hinder their abilities. "Teacher-centered classes are very standard in Korea and this is what Korean students and teachers alike are used to. The Confucian hierarchy facilitates the vertical hierarchy which exists in the second-language classroom, placing the student at the bottom of the hierarchy and the teacher at

the top," Jambor said.

"This gives the students little opportunity to voice any concerns and to effectively utilize their linguistic talents since they are not supposed to speak without the teacher's approval. All in all, this hinders the students' communicative output and greatly reduces the real-life opportunities in which they can put the language to ac-

"I THINK THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS, WHAT IS THEIR GOAL? WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LEARNING ENGLISH? SOMETIMES THEY JUST WANT TO GET A GOOD JOB; THAT'S WHY THEY LEARN ENGLISH. BUT I THINK IT IS NOT VERY EFFECTIVE. THEY HAVE TO LOVE ENGLISH IN ORDER FOR THEM TO LEARN."

— Ms. L, a Myanmarese tutor

tive use, necessary for acquiring the second language.

"Students should instead be placed in learner-centered classroom settings," he added. "However, both teachers and students in Korea believe that this is unnatural, and are reluctant to step out of their accepted comfort zones."

Ms. L, a Myanmar tutor, says she has a tough time helping her students learn English because of their reluctance to embrace it.

"I think the most important thing is, what is their goal? What is the purpose of learning English?" she said. "Sometimes they just want to get a good job; that's why they learn English. But I think it is not very effective. They have to love English in order for them to learn. If they love it, they can learn it faster. If they don't love it, they cannot learn."

However, an integral challenge in improving the system is the lack of hard evidence assessing the effectiveness of different programs, says Oh Jun-il, professor of Pukyong National University and president of the Korea Association of Teachers of English.



"It is worth noting that there are no perfect teachers anywhere in the world," he said. "In the absence of empirical evidence, it is hard to pinpoint effective and ineffective attempts by policymakers. "Many policies, however, don't seem to have been very effective in improving the overall quality of ELT in Korea," he added. "I think that the English language program has been internally assessed at sporadic intervals. Unfortunately, however, it has not been very thoroughly assessed by external agencies or experts."

The English divide Can the government close it?

Kim Hyun-hee spends 330,000 won a month for Kelly Choi to attend an English academy, and that's below average for what other moms pay for hagwon in her affluent Daechi-dong neighborhood, she says. On top of that, she sent her son to a private English kindergarten and is ready to put him through 12 more years of hagwon.

Her family's expenses are not uncommon: Parents spend an average 200,000 won monthly on each child's English classes, a survey by Yoon's English School found, and public data says nearly 70 percent of students went to hagwon last year.

The demand has led to a boom in the private education industry, prompting the number of language hagwon to more than double to 17,053 schools in 2009 from 2005. And as hagwon franchises become bigger and more corporate, their revenue has risen even faster, by 26.1 percent annually, according to a report by KB Kookmin Bank.

With the wealthiest families spending 10 times more on private education than those in the lowest income bracket, according to the Korea Development Institute, critics worry that the divide will limit lower-income students' abilities to compete with their upper-class peers.

Professor Oh notes that there is only so much the government can do to tackle the socio-economic divide in English education. He says that while the government is willing to improve the public English education program, investments into it have to take a backseat to other social programs. "National-level drastic ELT improvement projects would need significantly greater financial resources than now, which the government doesn't seem to be able to afford," he said. "There are other areas that require investment, such as social welfare for the less privileged and the elderly."

To level the playing field, the government has taken up policies to curb private education growth, in part by supporting the nearly free after-school programs at public schools for low-income students since mid-2009. Oh said that the quality of public and private English education is not much different, but that private schools allow for more exposure to English.

Because of the public programs, spending on overall private education then started to decline, which in effect began to lower hagwon profitability in an already oversaturated market, the KB report said. Nonetheless, the Education Ministry revealed recently that Korean parents spent 19 trillion won last year on all private education for their children, down 5.4 percent from a year earlier. Of that, they spent the most on English.

"Of course, lower-income students have fewer opportunities to learn English in the private sector. This can widen the English divide and adversely affect their later income mobility," Oh said. "Will it ever be possible in the Korean context to get rid of the private sector entirely? Many parents are still willing to invest money in their children's education at hagwon because they want their kids to beat the competition, and English has played a vital role."

A bright future

One of Korea's earliest and most influential attempts to boost English education was to import it. The year was 1995, the president was democratic activist Kim Young-sam, and Korea's emerging, outward-looking economy was in bloom with a 9.2 percent growth rate. Politicians recognized English as the key to their country's successful globalization, and launched the English Program in Korea (EPIK) to invite native English speakers to teach in the country. Its official aims were to improve the English communication skills of teachers and students, improve the English education system, and increase Koreans' cultural understanding of the world as well as foreigners' understanding of Korea.

"THE IDEA OF BEING A SALARYMAN AND WORKING FOR GIANT CONGLOMERATES IS PRETTY INGRAINED IN A LOT OF PEOPLE'S MINDS IN KOREA. CALL IT THE KOREAN DREAM. KOREANS WHO ARE FLUENT IN ENGLISH ARE A VALUABLE COMMODITY AND THEY KNOW IT."

— Douglas Lee, a Seoul native English teacher

The launch of the program was aided by the Peace Corps and the Fulbright Korean-American Educational Commission's volunteer project and international exchange program, bringing 59 native English speakers from six countries — the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Ireland, Australia and New Zealand — to Korea as the first official native English teachers and holders of the E-2 teaching visa. The government budget for the new program was about 2.36 billion won — less than 1 percent of what it is today, according to government estimates. The number of teachers inched up to 60 the next year and exploded to 856 teachers in 1997.

At the time, Ms. L, the Myanmar immigrant, was scrambling for ways to make money. In 1997 her church in Yeongdeungpo, Seoul, gave her an English Bible school class to teach for about \$1,000 a month, and she picked up another job at a church friend's hagwon and some tutoring gigs.

Even back then, the demand for English was bustling, she said. She witnessed a small influx of native English speakers as well as English-proficient Filipinos coming to make money teaching the language, mostly for hagwon or under-the-table tutoring jobs as she was doing.

But not long after, the "miracle on the Han" came crashing down with the onset of the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 — sweeping the burgeoning English education demand along with it. "Everyone stopped learning English. Every institute couldn't get students anymore. ... Everybody lost their job, and I was one of them," said Ms. L. "At that time, many

foreign teachers left the country because it wasn't easy to get students."

Ms. L was left unemployed for a year, and the Korean government cut its native English employment by 68 percent to 274 in 1998, according to government figures. The number continued to decline for the rest of the decade.

As the Korean economy recovered, the hiring of native English teachers picked up in 2002, with 500 new teachers.

'All about business'

How much growth is too much?

The new millennium marked a new start for Korea's growth, as construction, trade and investment found renewed momentum. Also boosting the economy early on was a wave of excitement leading to the World Cup in Korea and Japan in mid-2002.

Riding that wave of excitement was American James Gilbey, who found it opportune to teach English for a year as a way to stay in the country for the soccer tournament. "When I first moved to Mokpo it was very easy to find a job in Korea due to the lack of teachers that were willing to work in that region of the country," said Gilbey, who came to Korea in 2002 with no previous teaching experience or certification. "All you needed was a degree to get the job."

Meanwhile, new academies quickly began cropping up throughout the country, with the industry taking off particularly around mid-decade. Public and private schools alike began hiring en mas-

discipline in the hagwon."

She said the owners were nice at first, but had trouble paying teacher salaries. She later found they deducted health insurance and pension from her paycheck without paying it to the government. "It was all about business," she said.

The going salary at the time was 1.8 million won a month for native English teachers including Heaney, but has risen by half the pace of inflation since then. Consumer prices have increased by 31 percent since when she arrived in 2003, according to OECD figures. But the native English teacher's base salary — now about 2.1 million won per month — rose by less than 17 percent in that time.

"Living back then was so simple. Everything was cheap and affordable," said Heaney. "I have noticed that the prices of things have risen, but the pay scale has stayed the same."

Background checks, HIV, drug tests

Raising the bar, or the barriers?

With the rapid influx of foreigners to the traditionally homogenous country, a wave of xenophobia was sparked in the late 2000s with discoveries that a convicted child molester was found teaching in

"AN OVER-EMPHASIS ON ROTE LEARNING, RELATIVELY LOW LEVELS OF EXPOSURE TO FOREIGNERS IN EVERYDAY LIFE, AND TEACHER-STUDENT NORMS WHICH IMPEDE CONVERSATION PRACTICE ALL CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROBLEM."

— Excerpt from a report by Education First

se, with public schools breaking the 1,000 mark in 2005 with 1,178 teachers, the same year Seoul City and Gyeonggi Province established their own NET programs. Compared to 2005, the number doubled the next year, tripled in 2007 and grew nearly fivefold in 2008 to 5,553 native English teachers. The law was amended in 2007 to allow teachers from South Africa to join the fray.

But amid the boom of new schools that often had little experience with native English teachers or even English education in general, many incoming teachers realized their bosses would do whatever it took for the money.

Candice Boulton quickly found her role at her school to be little more than a show. Upon arriving in Yeongtong-dong near Suwon, Gyeonggi Province, in 2000, she was thrown into the classroom to teach without any training or prior experience, she said. Many teachers, both Korean and native, came and went.

"The director was not the best in being honest and I was often the last to know anything that was happening around me," she recalled. "I wouldn't say that we were perceived as useful for much more than boosting the image of the school we were at. I tended to seek out schools that did not see me as a white face in the room."

New Zealander Leigh Heaney arrived in Ansan, Gyeonggi Province, to work at a small school owned by a couple who spoke no English and had her working a split shift from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day. "The owners expected so much from these little kids," she recalled. "The materials were really dry and I improvised a lot, but was told just to stick to the book. ... There was absolutely no

Korea, some teachers were applying for jobs with forged college documents, and native English teachers were caught smuggling drugs into the country through the mail. The events coincided with larger issues such as the temporary ban on U.S. beef imports amid a mad cow disease scare. In the commotion, a group of Koreans calling themselves the Anti-English Spectrum lobbied to the government with claims that certain foreigners were prone to spreading AIDS, dealing drugs or committing crimes.

The government reacted by tightening requirements for E-2 visa holders: drug and AIDS tests every year, and apostilled diploma copies and federal criminal record checks upon visa application.

"I saw a huge shift in the majority of skeptics around 2007 when the infamous Christopher Paul Neil (child molester from Canada) was discovered to be in Korea. The next year there was a story of an NET telling students how to use a bong for smoking marijuana. Somewhere in there we had to start taking HIV tests and get apostilled documents of all kinds," said Candice Boulton. "The sudden influx of foreigners caused humongous clashes of culture and this led to Koreans thinking foreigners were stubborn and foreigners thinking of Koreans as naïve."

Meanwhile, with taxpayers sinking hundreds of billions of won a year into the native English teacher program to employ teachers who sometimes had little more qualification than a bachelor's degree, and the demand for the jobs continuously on the rise, the government recently made an effort to raise standards by requiring TEFL or other teaching certifications for teachers in public schools.

Reuben Zuidof, a recruiter, has noticed incremental increases in the requirements that most schools have for foreign teachers. "For

PUBLIC BUDGET FOR NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS (EST.)

Source: Ministry of Education

1995

2.36 billion won

2000

5.84 billion won

2005

47.1 billion won

2010

341.8 billion won

2011

351.9 billion won

2012

340.8 billion won

private schools, over the past five years we have schools that now require a B.A. in education, whereas they used to hire teachers with any degree," he said. "We have schools requesting very particular teachers based on race, age and looks, when five years ago that same school would hire teachers who were committed, flexible and outgoing no matter what their race, age or looks were."

Critics debate whether the new bar is effective in increasing the quality of teachers. Brian Deutsch, writer of the popular local blog Brian in Jeollanam-do and longtime observer of Korea's EFL industry, argues that the requirements are little more than a nominal effort to improve the system.

"Even a decade ago Korean teachers were writing about their anxiety with the shift toward the goal of 'communicative competence' and the resulting influx of foreign English teachers. There was a lot of publicity about the need to hire 'qualified' teachers. However, that didn't bear itself out," said Deutsch. "By 2010 public schools were actively pursuing young, inexperienced and cheap teachers. EPIK now requires teachers to possess a TEFL certificate, but these can be done online quickly, are of little real value, and are basically a nominal attempt at instituting an advanced 'qualification.'"

With more than a decade of experience teaching in Korea, Candice Boulton believes that instead of certifications, a solution for improving the quality of teachers is to test their ability and train them before they hit the classroom. It's still a fraction of the requirements for regular Korean English teachers, she says, but might help ease tensions between Korean and native-speaking teachers.

"It should not be assumed that if you speak a language you can teach it, nor should it be assumed that if you learned about teaching that you can teach," said Boulton, who came to Korea with no experience but said was later motivated to complete teaching credentials as well as a master's course in linguistics. "I think that this 'training' may alleviate some feelings of resentment from Korean teachers who had to study very hard to become a teacher."

The new teacher

How can Korea meet demand?

Despite the conflicts, the need for English teachers prevailed. To keep up with the skyrocketing demand for English-speaking teachers, the government in 2008 floated the idea of hiring teachers from countries with English as an official language and that share a free trade agreement with South Korea — namely, the Philippines, India, Malaysia and Singapore, the latter two having the highest English proficiency in Asia.

Teachers from those countries would be held to a higher standard, having to prove English-speaking proficiency and hold a teaching or English degree. The Education Ministry said that in 2008, the E-2 visa requirements were expanded in the first step to allow guest English teachers from those countries to work in Korea.

But progress to bring in regular Filipino teachers remains at a standstill, a Philippine diplomat told Groove Korea. Since a deal for teachers wasn't inked in Korea's free trade agreement with ASEAN, which the Philippines is part of, the ball is in Korea's court if it wants to move forward, said Philippine Embassy labor attaché Felicitas Bay.

Meanwhile, two years after the amendment of the E-2 visa law, the first Indian teacher was hired in September 2010.

The program hasn't expanded much since then: Two Indian teachers were employed in Korea in 2012, the Education Ministry said, noting that they receive the same pay and benefits as Western English teachers.

An Indian official, who sat down with Groove Korea, called the preference in Korea for native English teachers a "craze" — a belief that their native understanding of the language is inherently better for learning conversation. He requested anonymity.

India — which placed 13th on the English Proficiency Index, compared to Korea at 21st — does not seek out guest English teachers as Korea does. All English teachers are Indian or expats who already live in India. India, a former British colony, had the "benefit of being colonized," as the official put it.

In his opinion, Indians are successful with learning English because they see it as an international language that helps them engage with the outside world. Meanwhile, Koreans, very proud of their culture, are conservative and even protective of their own language: They see only the commercial benefit of learning English and don't embrace the cultural aspect of learning a new language, he said.

Asked about the slow expansion of the program, an Education Ministry official pointed to a lack of demand. To hire a foreign English teacher from a specific country, there must first be a demand for one from the school or the office of education. Then specific working-level agreements regarding teacher recruitment must be reached between the two countries, which takes a substantial amount of time, he said.

Meanwhile, Korean parents and teachers have mixed opinions about hiring Indian and Southeast Asian teachers. Some believe that they should be paid less because of their non-Western origin and thus non-Western accent, and for the same reason, some are wary of hiring them at all.

NUMBER OF NETS BY REGION

(As of Dec. 31, 2012)

Sources: Ministry of Education, Korea
Immigration Service

"You know, the pronunciation and accent (of non-Western English speakers) is very strange," said Ms. H, the elementary school teacher, and mother of two elementary-aged girls. "If I choose my daughters' teacher, I cannot choose one from the Philippines or India. I want a native English speaker from America or Canada." She thinks most Korean parents would agree.

Ms. K, the middle school teacher, said the bias against such teachers is because Koreans are afraid of learning non-Western or non-native English.

"I learned how to speak English in a private institute where I had a Filipino teacher. ... My English speaking ability improved a lot, so I don't care," she said. "As time goes by, the prejudice will disappear."

Professor Oh echoed that the association between quality English education and Western native speaking English teachers is what keeps the employment demographics the way they are. "Many school administrators, teachers, parents and students still tend to think that native teachers of English should match their stereotype of 'a native speaker of English' — people only from certain ethnic backgrounds," said Oh.

"However, race doesn't seem to be the only culprit. Many people tend to think that expat teachers with accents other than standard American and British ones don't provide the right model for Korean learners of English. I believe, however, that as Korea becomes more multicultural over the years, expat teachers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds will be welcomed into the public and private sectors."

Paul Jambor, the Korea University assistant professor, says Korea is stuck with a dilemma. As salaries for qualified teachers are higher in countries in the West and more recently the Middle East, qualified Western English speakers are less prone to eye the Korean education market, he suggested. "This is not to say that all 'white' teachers in South Korea are unqualified, but rather to say that there is certainly a significant number of unqualified teachers teaching English in Korea as of this day."

Discrimination hinders the employment of Indian and Southeast Asian teachers, but if Korea wants to increase its pool of qualified teachers, it has no choice but to break down those barriers, he said. "Taken as a whole, the choice for Koreans is simple: learn to accept substandard 'white'/Western teachers, or recognize the value of being taught by 'qualified teachers' of other races from various Asian countries, since they are more than willing to work for the pay currently on offer."

The robot teacher

Notably, a few Southeast Asians, particularly from the Philippines, have been increasingly employed at hagwon and rural

schools or through distance learning programs. Those Filipinos who do land legal jobs within the country are either F-visa holders (spouses or permanent residents) or naturalized, noted Bay of the Philippine Embassy.

So in December 2010 Daegu City tried out an unconventional way to get Southeast Asian teachers into the classroom — by putting a different face on them.

Twenty-nine egg-shaped robots named EngKey descended upon 21 elementary schools in the metropolis through a pilot project reportedly to foster the country's nascent robot industry. The 1-meter-tall machine (picture Eva from "Wall-E," on wheels), created by the Korea Institute of Science and Technology, could communicate to students, read to them and dance to songs by moving its arms and head.

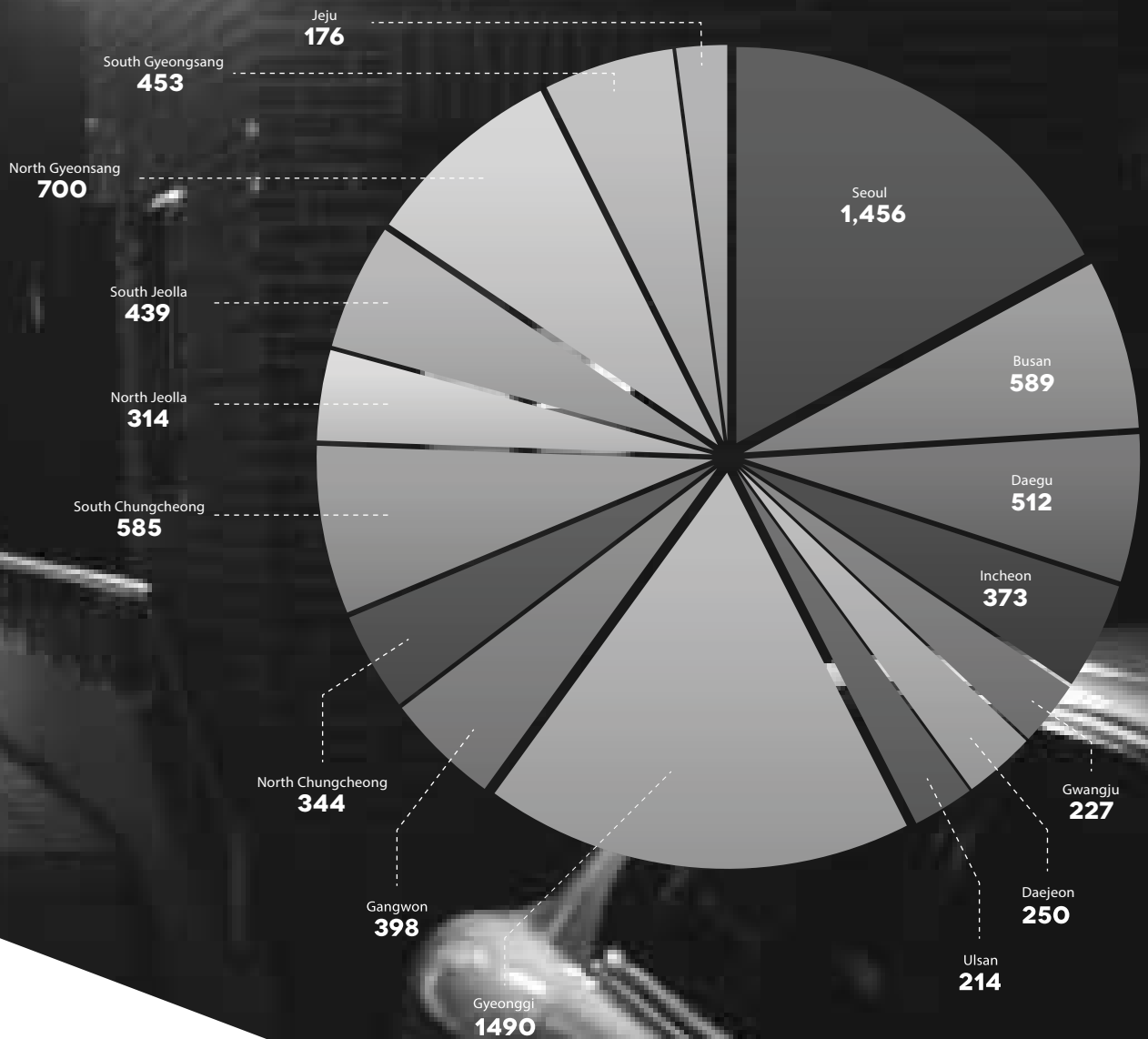
"LOWER-INCOME STUDENTS HAVE FEWER OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ENGLISH IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THIS CAN WIDEN THE ENGLISH DIVIDE AND ADVERSELY AFFECT THEIR LATER INCOME MOBILITY."

— Oh Jun-il, professor of Pukyong National University and president of the Korea Association of Teachers of English.

And topping it off, on an LCD screen where the robot's head should be was the face of a blonde Caucasian woman — an avatar for an instructor in the Philippines who could see and hear the students and whose facial movements could be detected and transmitted instantaneously to the character on screen.

"Well-educated, experienced Filipino teachers are far cheaper than their counterparts elsewhere, including South Korea," Sagong Seong-dae, a senior scientist at KIST, told AFP at the time. "Plus, they won't complain about health insurance, sick leave and severance package, or leave in three months for a better-paying job in Japan. ... All you need is a repair and upgrade every once in a while."

The Ministry of Knowledge Economy, which together with Daegu Metropolitan City invested 1.58 billion won into the



four-month pilot program, announced that it planned to install one robot, each costing 10 million won, in all 8,400 elementary schools in Korea by 2013, according to news reports.

The project was short-lived and didn't make it past the pilot phase, stopping in March 2011, according to the Center for Intelligent Robotics, which organized the project. An official said the program was not continued because it was "not feasible" and "lacked practicality."

This wasn't the first robot to be deployed in Korean classrooms, with an earlier version of EngKey — sans blonde avatar — even earning a nod from Time magazine on its 50 Best Inventions of 2010 list, and other robots reportedly introduced as early as 2005.

"They are a gimmick, and a poorly implemented one at that, with results ranging from ineffective to embarrassing," Deutsch said about the robots, which he had lambasted in 2010 when they first made news. "I think they were created to show it could be done, that manufacturers had the technology to produce them, with no real thought to whether they would have a real effect in the classroom."

"There is definitely potential in other types of distance education, and if these are thoughtfully implemented by policy-makers who know what they're doing, these methods will be infinitely more effective than a computer program on wheels."

In fact, companies have flooded into the local satellite learning market with cost-effective alternatives to live native English teachers, particularly for students in more remote areas. One early entrant was Wyoming-based company

Eleutian Technology in 2006, teaching students at Seoul Digital University, then expanding to Incheon public schools the next year. By late 2008 it claimed to teach more than 15,000 students in Korea, and currently boasts some 30,000 tutoring sessions per month.

However, an executive at Eleutian told Groove Korea that because the Korean market is so saturated with cheap distance-learning programs, the company is looking elsewhere in Asia for further growth. Its biggest market in Asia was Japan last year and it expects to gain a major foothold in China this year.

"Many Koreans believe that price is most important, but when learning English, much like any other subject, the quality of instruction is critical," she said. "As long as the Korean market and Korean businessmen try to learn English based purely on low cost, they will continue to fall behind the rest of the world in learning English."

Switching gears

Who makes the better teacher?

Former President Lee Myung-bak saw English as an essential tool for brightening his country's future, and in his

ambitious pre-office plans, his transition team in 2008 proposed that every school subject would be taught in English by 2010, according to The Hankyoreh newspaper.

But that pledge didn't pan out: Facing heavy backlash from teachers, parents and education experts, the team settled on hiring 23,000 new Korean teachers over three years to teach EFL classes in English and establishing a teacher-training program for 3,000 Korean teachers a year.

So as Lee stepped into office in 2009, with nearly 8,000 native English teachers in the country costing an estimated 320 billion won, several education offices decided it was time to shift the focus of public English education, and turn towards hiring Koreans to do the native English speaker's job.

Through the Teaching English in English program, English-proficient Koreans can be hired as English Conversation Instructors without undergoing regular Korean teacher training. Requirements vary by school, but the conversation teachers can have as little training and experience as are required of a native English teacher — a degree from a university in an English-speaking country, a TEFL or TESOL certificate, and a proven ability in English, as demonstrated by their test score. An entry-level English conversation instructor can earn the same starting salary as a native English teacher as well — some 25.2 million won per year for an elementary school position in Seoul. However, they are less expensive to hire than NETs, who each cost more than 40 million won per year in salary, housing, round-trip airfare, year-end bonuses and other benefits.

THOUGH MY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION AND I HOLD A TEACHING CERTIFICATE FROM MY HOME STATE OF MICHIGAN, I FELT LIKE MY EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS WEREN'T OVERLY APPRECIATED AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL I WORKED FOR."

— Alex Karpicke, a Seoul public school teacher since August 2011

Plus, while regular Korean public school teachers can only stay at the same school for five years before having to transfer to another school in the region, English Conversation Instructors are currently allowed to stay at the same school for up to eight years.

The government's ultimate goal is to have these English conversation teachers eventually replace native English teachers in classrooms, but some teachers and parents express a lukewarm response to this change, saying Korea is not ready.

Brian Meyer, a Seoul public elementary school teacher, suggests it would be a feasible alternative "if the Korean teacher has an excellent command of the language and is a very well-educated or trained teacher who uses a variety of lesson materials and methods; however, I feel that there aren't many teachers who fall into this category," he added.

"Korean curriculum teaches memorization so that students can do well on tests. Until they change the basis of their curriculum to language proficiency, they will always have problems teaching English."

"The purpose of having native teachers was to train Korean teachers to speak in English. They think Korean teachers can teach English in English," said Ms. K, who is a regular English teacher, not a TEE conversation instructor.

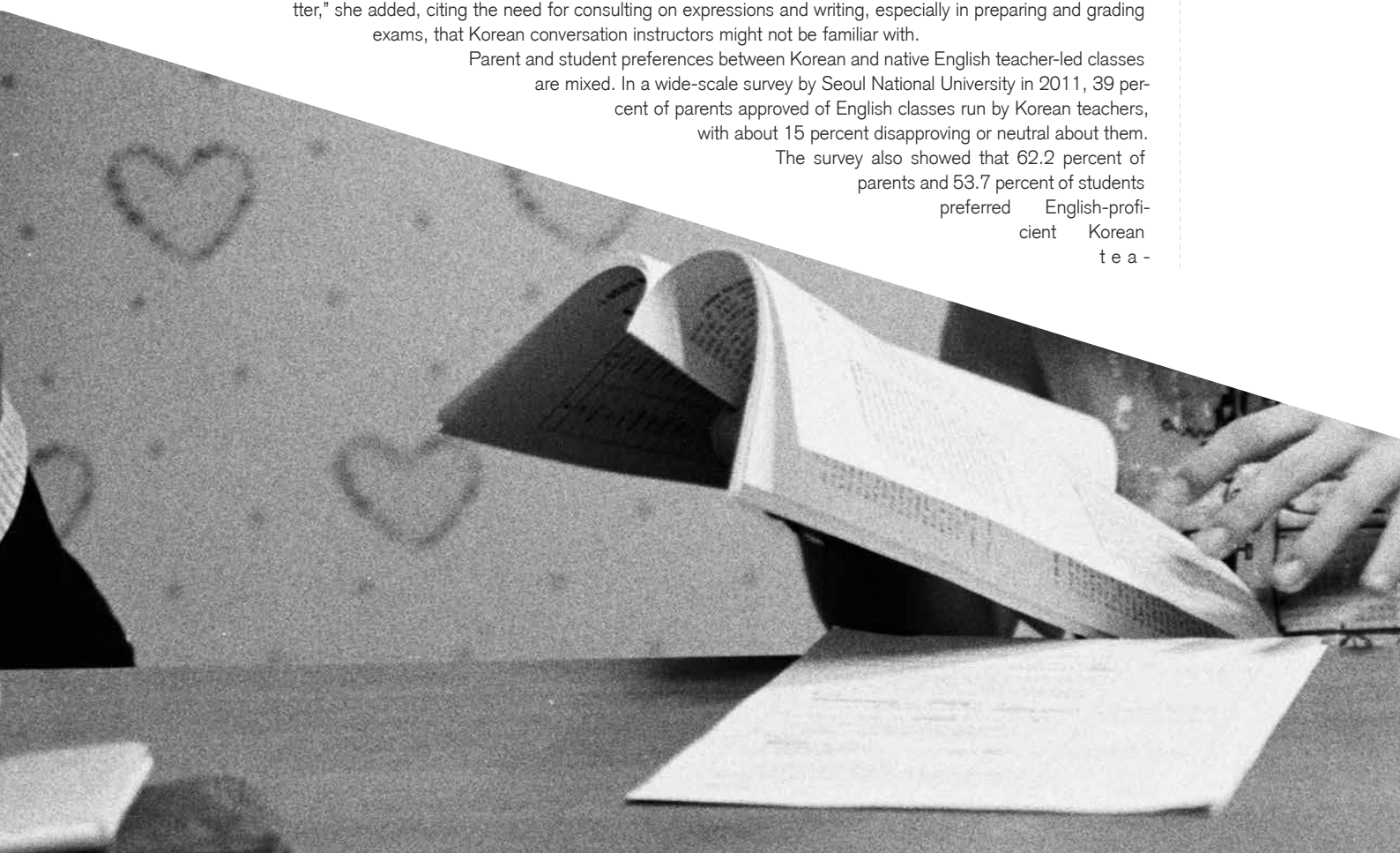
While she has seen Korean teachers' English abilities improve over the past decade, she argues that they may not fully understand the nuances of the language, and their skill is still insufficient to carry on the classes in English. "A Korean English teacher will not be effective. Although their ability is really nice, she's not a native person. She cannot teach culture, the different meanings of expressions," she said.

"We have to think about why all students have to learn English. If they have to, learning from native teachers is better," she added, citing the need for consulting on expressions and writing, especially in preparing and grading exams, that Korean conversation instructors might not be familiar with.

Parent and student preferences between Korean and native English teacher-led classes are mixed. In a wide-scale survey by Seoul National University in 2011, 39 percent of parents approved of English classes run by Korean teachers, with about 15 percent disapproving or neutral about them.

The survey also showed that 62.2 percent of parents and 53.7 percent of students

preferred English-proficient Korean teachers.



chers who teach well, whereas 26.9 percent of parents and 29.7 percent of students preferred native speakers.

On the other hand, 62.4 percent of parents said classes with native English teachers were "absolutely" necessary. In the same survey, 34.7 percent of primary and secondary school students said they actively participate in their Korean teacher's English class, but about twice as many — 76.9 percent — participated in their native English teacher's class.

But studying English becomes less about communication as students age, and more about acing the next exam, a study by the Seoul Education Research and Information Institute last year suggested.

Researchers found that high school students who took native English teacher classes were less attentive, poorer performing and less satisfied with the classes compared to younger students.

The researchers suggested that because they're more pressured by exams or college in their near future, high school students care more about classes that will help them prepare for exams — so NETs' classes focusing on communication and participation take a backseat to classes that highlight memorization, grammar and drilling test questions.

Alex Karpicke, a Seoul public school teacher since August 2011, felt that his role in middle school was "tolerated" by unsupportive co-teachers, whose negative attitudes rubbed off on his students.

"Though my undergraduate degree is in English education and I hold a teaching certificate from my home state of Michigan, I felt like my experience and qualifications weren't overly appreciated at the middle school I worked for," said Karpicke, who taught at a model school, or pilot school, in Seobinggo-dong, Seoul.

"It felt like my role there was something to be tolerated. Many of the co-teachers didn't feel any responsibility for what went on in my classroom. They were preoccupied with their own English classes," he added. "This set a negative tone that was hard to cope with. The students quickly adopted the attitude of the co-teachers, which made my role fairly obsolete.

"That being said, I don't feel like middle and high schools are the most useful places for NETs to be working," he added, since the curriculum focuses on grammar covered on standardized tests. "Most NETs are useless in this area. Middle and high school students know their NETs are useless for this."

Because of the nature of different age groups' language learning abilities, he said that NETs would be more effective with elementary students, who are "more absorbent, more active and more willing to interact with a native teacher than older students" — and not focused on test prep.

"My role at my current school, an elementary school, is much more hands-on. Here, the co-teachers are just that — CO-teachers. We plan, revise and implement the lessons together. My ideas are accepted and used. That is a good feeling."

The beginning of the end

In December 2011, Seoul City announced it would begin to phase out native English teachers, cutting them from all elementary, middle and high schools by 2014.

Under the 2012 school year budget, 4.4 billion won was cut for the funding of native English teachers at most of the city's 300 high schools, aside from specialty schools such as language schools, thus eliminating 255 jobs. Teachers at those schools were either transferred to elementary schools or their contracts were not renewed after completion, and the classes were taken over by Korean teachers.

Education officials also planned to cut 252 and 200 foreign teachers from elementary and middle schools, respectively, translating to a 57 percent drop in all native English teachers in Seoul from the previous year.

For the 2013 school year the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education said it plans to hire 686 teachers, down 65 from 2012. According to information provided by the SMOE, the SMILE Project was launched in 2008 to allocate NETs to every school by 2012, and the goal was achieved by 2010. Officials planned to reduce the NET program once the "TEE capacity" of Korean English Conversation instructors was "100 percent guaranteed." The SMOE said 95.6 percent of English teachers possessed "TEE capacity" by the end of 2011.

SMOE supervisor Lee Hyang-ah said there was no substantial difference between NET and Korean instructors, but that students participated more and used more English in Korean teacher-led classes than in NET-led classes.

"Parents and students answered that their most ideal English teacher is 'a Korean teacher with outstanding command over English,'" she added, citing the SNU survey. "Similarly, participants showed three times more preference for Korean teachers over NETs."

Because the high school curriculum is geared toward college entrance exams, NETs are less utilized among older grades, she noted. "The effect of NETs is most pronounced in students' development in speaking, listening, pronunciation, cultural understanding, motivation and reduction of the fear of foreigners."

Similarly, the Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education — overseeing public programs in the province with the most native English teachers — told its teachers in August 2011 that it would initiate a hiring freeze from October that year to February 2012, during which time it did not hire any new native English teachers or renew any teachers' contracts, to stabilize the budget and resume hiring en masse in March 2012.

Hiring numbers for the Gyeonggi English Program in Korea, which operates under the GPOE, peaked in 2011 with 1,119 teachers before the freeze. The program slid in 2012 when the number of teachers was cut to 819.

However, counting the teachers within the province who were funded by city councils, there were 1,543 teachers as of December 2012 — the highest count among all provinces nationwide, GEPIK told Groove Korea.

GEPIK said that for the 2013 school year, 1,207 native English teachers were to be hired — a drop of 336 teachers from 2012 — with 483 funded by the GPOE and 724 by city councils.

Funding is cut for native teachers in all middle and high schools in cities, while rural area teachers have been retained, as students in those regions have limited access to native English teachers, GEPIK said, adding that the employment of elementary school teachers was not affected by this year's budget cut.

"A KOREAN ENGLISH TEACHER WILL NOT BE EFFECTIVE. ALTHOUGH THEIR ABILITY IS REALLY NICE, SHE'S NOT A NATIVE PERSON. SHE CANNOT TEACH CULTURE, THE DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF EXPRESSIONS," SHE SAID.

— Ms. K, a Gyeonggi Province middle school English teacher

The native English teacher program was always intended to be temporary, GEPIK officials emphasized, as a way to help train Korean English teachers. The viability and budget of the program, they added, is up to politicians and the provincial and central governments. "It's really their call," a coordinator commented.

"As for the budget for 2013, (it) is still under evaluation and we are waiting for the decisions to come through," the program officials told Groove Korea. "And we are aware there are various assumptions regarding the future of the NET program. The budget cut or resizing of NET program was already planned out, but the question was when and how gradually.

"When we first started GEPIK in 2005, our primary purpose of the NET program was to provide not only academic but cultural English education for our students as well as for our Korean English teachers in Korea. Now we are entering the second phase of the plan, which involves giving more opportunity back to Korean English teachers with improved English ability.

"So are we facing the end of GEPIK? Our answer is 'no.' GEPIK is reducing its size but increasing in its quality."

Longtime native English teachers observed the bubble and saw what was coming.

"I have been with GEPIK since January of 2007 — six years. I saw it hit its apex and now see it dwindling and being handed over to English-speaking Koreans," said Boulton, who has taught in Korea since 2000. "I knew it would come to that. It is the logical end and way better for the Korean taxpayer. This is what is driving me back to teaching in a private school at the beginning of March 2013."

She added that with the various teaching certificates and other qualifications she's acquired over the years, public schools can no longer afford her, hence her return to the private sector.

"The writing has been on the wall for years, and it can be assumed that NETs will ultimately be phased out of public school classrooms in the next decade," said Deutsch. "The structure of the public school curriculum simply doesn't leave any room for an NET who holds

class a couple times a month, teaches outside the tests, and doesn't have meaningful interaction with the several other English teachers at his or her school.

"Removing native English speakers eliminates a valuable point of contact for most Korean students," he added. "They will spend their formative years studying English — albeit as a subject, not a language — but will never have any meaningful contact with a native English speaker and no authentic insight into the culture(s) from whence the languages come."

Officials at the Education Ministry and the English Program in Korea — which oversees the public English programs nationwide except in Gyeonggi and South Jeolla provinces, and those funded by city councils — say that there is no composite data showing which provinces and cities are implementing full phaseouts. An EPIK supervisor noted that Seoul will keep its native English teachers in elementary schools, but the plans past the current spring semester, which depend highly on the government budget, are still up in the air.

The numbers of native English teachers in Daejeon, Korea's fifth-largest metropolis, have been rising. From 117 NETs in 2008, the number more than doubled to 250 teachers in 2012, and the Daejeon Metropolitan Office of Education said that it plans to keep the same number of teachers in public schools in 2013.

"For the upcoming years, DMOE is planning to keep the current budget for the guest English teachers and will hire a similar number of GETs (guest English teachers, or NETs) for our public school system," a DMOE official said. "At this moment, we are not planning to cut budgets or phase out the GET program."

The DMOE is currently working to enhance the teachers' expertise by requiring 60 hours of training, including on designing engaging lesson plans, building relationships with co-teachers, and co-teaching successfully, the official said.

Elsewhere in the country, Busan said it plans to drop 62 teachers; Incheon 50 over the year, Daegu 22, South Gyeongsang Province eight, Jeju six and Ulsan four. Gwangju City and South Jeolla and North Chungcheong provinces said they will keep the same number of teachers, and other offices of education could not provide a number by press time.

The central government insisted that the regional phaseouts do not spell the end for the native English teacher program.

"Currently, Seoul City is phasing out its native English assistant teacher program. However, each provincial and municipal office of education is responsible for preparing its own budget for the native assistant English teacher program," an Education Ministry official told the media.

"English-speaking Korean teachers have been placed in schools beginning in 2009. This is not part of a plan to gradually phase out native English assistant teachers, but an effort to reduce the number of students per class as the current size is too large to operate an English class focused on communication. As native teachers and Korean teachers are allocated for different purposes, it is our hope that both the programs will continue."

Back to school

What next?

Millions of students pile back into classrooms this month at the start of another school year. At Ms. K's middle school, no one has taught in the English Zone classroom since the last native English teacher left

"TEACHER-CENTERED CLASSES ARE VERY STANDARD IN KOREA AND THIS IS WHAT KOREAN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ALIKE ARE USED TO. THE CONFUCIAN HIERARCHY FACILITATES THE VERTICAL HIERARCHY WHICH EXISTS IN THE SECOND-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM, PLACING THE STUDENT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HIERARCHY AND THE TEACHER AT THE TOP."

— Paul Jambor, a Korea University
assistant professor specializing in English
for academic purposes

nearly a year ago. Projects and decorations still hang on the walls, gathering dust and colors fading, and a welcome letter still sits unread on a computer's desktop for the replacement teacher who never came.

"We locked the door, and we don't use it. Until now we haven't used it," she said.

There were some occasions, she said, when she needed the help of a native speaker. But aside from the dark, vacant room at the end of the hall, over the year "nothing special" has changed; after all, she noted, students used to have just one class a week with the native English teacher. "We (did) not use the native teachers very well," she said.

The school applied for a Korean conversation instructor, but Ms. K said their request was denied. "We asked for a conversation teacher to the school office, but they don't have any money for that, so we can't have that kind of teacher," she said.

Nowadays, educators are caught between government policies to narrow the English divide — by boosting public programs and reining in the private education industry — and balance the budget to provide for other welfare projects. Oh emphasizes that while educators are attempting to enhance English education through various methods, politics will continue to get in the way of major changes.

Ultimately, professors Jambor and Oh both echo Ms. K: Even if native speakers are phased out of public schools, Korea will move on, and in the medium run, the status quo will remain. Demand for English education will continue to propel the hagwon industry regardless of any policies by the government to curb it; if anything, the lack of native English teachers in public schools may even boost demand for private education, Jambor suggested.

"Many policymakers, I think, are aware that phasing out expat teachers might weaken ELT in the public sector and stimulate more students to turn to hagwon," said professor Oh, suggesting that the new government, led by President Park Geun-hye, places a lower priority on improving English education than that of Lee Myung-bak, who handed over power last month. "In the next five years, I suspect that no major changes will take place within the public and private ELT sectors."

Kim, Kelly Choi's mother, doesn't agree with the experts, and says improvements are being made, such as the new tests geared toward communication skills. However, because she is still dissatisfied with the public school system, she's decided that hagwon schooling is a must for her children. Nonetheless, she believes it's still important not to give up on the public English program to give every child a shot at a solid foundation. Learning English helps children gain confidence and get a taste of the outside world at an early age, she says.

"I want everybody to have the chance to learn English," she said. "If they have the talent to speak English, they can improve their own English ability by themselves. But we should give them the chance to start.

"If they have the skill to speak English well, it's easier to get their goals or their dreams," she said, suggesting that if they're motivated, there are plenty of free opportunities to keep learning for those who can't afford hagwon, such as radio or TV programs.

But beyond motivation, the root of the problem, as parents, teachers and observers alike have said, lies at the heart of the recurring debate: Why are Koreans learning English?

"English study used to be a means of national advancement through personal improvement, but Korea's certainly not the same country it was in 1993 and doesn't have to play catch-up," noted Deutsch.

Now that the original objective of English education to propel Korea into developed-world growth is no longer as imminent, he says, part of the challenge is to change people's perceptions about learning English as a language — rather than as a subject, test score or resume builder.

"In a sense it would involve changing a mindset, by questioning what exactly all this English is for and if it's worth it," he said. He finds some optimism in small pockets of the population, particularly the younger generation who have had real-world experience with English.

Coupled with a new mentality, Deutsch says that to advance toward effective education for functional, communication-based English, policymakers must make clear, thoughtful objectives for the education system along with the steps to achieve them.

"The NET experiment was fraught with lack of planning, false starts and contradictions," he said. "Nobody knew what they were supposed to do or why, districts hired anyone who applied, and colleagues were resentful of the NETs brought in to help. For the most part no real curriculum was in place for NETs and there was no real way to measure their effectiveness. And now, years later, it's the NETs who have shouldered the blame for bad policy and poor implementation."

It's not an easy task and there are no easy solutions, but he suggests that moving away from teaching purely for tests, and removing the requirement for job applicants and students to take English tests for local companies and schools, could be the first steps to help change the tide.

"Korea can achieve long-term improvement best if it sets real goals and works toward them," he added. "If the goal today is still 'communicative competence,' there needs to be thoughtful planning and discussion on what this means, who can best help to achieve it, and how to work toward it during one year, five years, 10 years and a generation." 🇰🇷

GET OUT OF JAIL FREE

The president could always be relied upon to leave a state-sanctioned ladder by the prison wall, but times may be changing

Column by Daniel Tudor / Illustration by Adela Ordoñez



ABOUT THE WRITER:



Daniel Tudor is The Economist's Korea correspondent. Recently he released his first book, "Korea: The Impossible Country," which has been the subject of articles and reviews in the Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, Time, and others. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of Groove Korea. — Ed.



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설리번 어린이 영어스쿨

The next test of a “new Korea” will come when Park Geun-hye makes her first round of presidential pardons on liberation day in August: Will Hanwha chairman Kim Seung-yeon have his conviction overturned? And will SK chairman Chey Tae-won also remain a guest of the state?

● What was Lee Myung-bak's last grand gesture as president, before heading off into the sunset? It was an act of mercy: the forgiveness of 55 people who had broken the laws of this land. Unfortunately, some of them were old friends of his: brown envelope-loving politicians, and dodgy businesspeople who had been part of the Cheong Wa Dae (Blue House) nexus. Friendship, it seems, is more powerful than legacy.

It might seem strange, then, to talk of a new, cleaner Korea. But when it comes to chaebol (conglomerate) convicts, times may be changing just a little. Not only did now ex-President Lee overlook them, but SK chairman Chey Tae-won was recently handed a four-year jail sentence for making off with company money. That doesn't sound like a lot in comparison to folks like Jeff Skilling, but it is a start.

In the very recent past, any top chaebol chairman could basically pilfer as much as he wanted, without worrying too much about a proper prison term. Suspended sentences were a stock-in-trade. And even when a judge handed out hard time, the president — whether a so-called conservative like Lee Myung-bak or a so-called progressive like Roh Moo-hyun — could always be relied upon to leave a state-sanctioned ladder by the prison wall.


Three of Korea's five most powerful chairmen have been awarded such pardons in recent years. If there was a general pattern, it worked a bit like this: A boss would spend a couple of months inside, and meanwhile, his staff would be working flat-out on all kinds of warm and fuzzy charitable projects that for some reason never seemed worth doing before. And then the man himself would become mysteriously ill, with a condition that could only be cured by, er, not being in jail. Release on health grounds would follow, followed by a full presidential pardon.

The official reasoning behind the pardons was always that the economy “needed” chaebol chairmen (as though such companies would simply disappear overnight without them). Indeed, the economy does “need” them — it needs them to behave in a responsible, law-abiding fashion. Fraud and illegal transfers of wealth are at least part of the reason that Korean stocks trade at low valuations; fix the problem and corporate Korea would actually be worth a lot more.

Hanwha chairman Kim Seung-yeon is currently taking a rest from jail on medical grounds; let's hope he gets well soon, indeed. The next test of a “new Korea” will come when Park Geun-hye makes her first round of presidential pardons on liberation day in August: Will Mr. Kim, grievously sick or otherwise, have his conviction overturned? And will Mr. Chey of SK also remain a guest of the state?

When Korea was still a go-go developmental state, people were a lot more forgiving of corporate naughtiness. The rising chaebol tide lifted all boats. But now that it no longer does, fraud and corruption cannot be considered anything but zero-sum activities. Politicians know this, and that's why I think that the era of the controversial presidential pardon is coming to an end. President Park will hopefully use the pardon for its original purpose — as a gesture of national unity.

Since the dawn of the chaebol system, government and big business have helped each other. A certain amount of rule breaking by all concerned was tolerated, provided it didn't rock the boat too much. But now, I think we are heading into a new and better era where corporate crime is taken more seriously.

I hope I'm not wrong — but if I am, I'll be able to write all kinds of nasty articles about it. 



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‘BEWARE LIBERALS AND ZOMBIES’

Coming to terms with America’s addiction to firearms

Column and Photo by John M. Rodgers



● “I finally bought a gun the other day! Yesterday bought a lot of ammo! Beware liberals and zombies!!!”

So went a recent Facebook post written by a friend I met years ago teaching in Korea. Big Chris, as we called him then, hails from Oklahoma, taught English at a girls’ high school, liked to lift weights and enjoyed knocking back more than a few. But not once during the years that I knew him abroad did he mention guns or politics. Times had changed, I found, after reconnecting with him upon my return to America. Such has been my introduction to the political polarization of the nation.

In Korea, one is startled by both the existence and nonexistence of guns. Still technically at war with the North, the South’s military has a significant presence across the peninsula, from the many guard posts along the coasts to the soldiers stationed on Mt. Bukak behind the Blue House

in Seoul (in 1968, North Korean commandoes came over the mountain during a thwarted assassination attempt). And every month, air raid drills remind people that war is not far away.

On the other hand, the police carry pea shooters that are often not loaded, or function as gas guns, and the small number of certified hunters who do own guns have to store them at local police stations when they’re not in use.

Back in America, a peculiar feeling came over me as I saw a hulking policeman walk into a local restaurant with a large, black handgun holstered on his belt. I didn’t feel safer. Then, when I went hiking in a local state park this past fall and heard a shot ring out within a stone’s throw of the trail, I flinched and wondered what in the world was going on. It was only hunting season, which I knew, and hunters can hunt on state park lands

ABOUT THE WRITER:

John M. Rodgers is a founding editor of The Three Wise Monkeys webzine and currently acts as Groove Korea’s editor-at-large. John is back in the United States after a long stint in Korea and will be writing about readjustment. — Ed.

In Korea one is startled by both the existence and nonexistence of guns. Still technically at war with the North, the South's military is ever present. And every month, air raid drills remind people that war is not far away.

"off the trail." This I was told by both a New Hampshire Fish and Game lieutenant and a Parks and Recreation employee, even though a sign posted at the trailhead said, "Firearms must not be used near beaches, picnic areas, roadways or foot trails. (Res-P 301.04, RSA 207:3-a)." "Near" was up for interpretation.

And speaking of proximity to guns in my state of New Hampshire, you may never know if you're near a gun because it's okay to carry a concealed weapon. I don't know if it's my age, the effect of the recent shootings here or my years in Korea, but I find that confounding. Why would any citizen need to carry a concealed weapon, tucked inside a coat, in a waistband or wherever it's comfortable to pack heat? Yet this position clashes with many gun owners and advocates here. It's the Second Amendment, they tell me; you can't take away the Constitutional right to "keep and bear arms." Don't mention that the American Revolutionary War was almost 240 years ago when the colonial militias actually needed arms to fight against the British.

I didn't grow up with guns. My dad, a veterinarian, and mom, a teacher, had us on the water or in the mountains depending on the season. We skied (water, downhill, cross country), skated, snowshoed, swam, boated — but never got guns. Well, that's not entirely true — we had BB guns when I was a teenager, which was a bad idea given our wars in the woods. But I knew plenty of kids who hunted and there were even boys at my high school who drove to school in pickups with guns mounted on racks in the rear window of the cab.

I have little against hunters (unless they're 20 feet from a hiking trail), especially those out there intending to bag a deer or grouse or boar for food. Most of these hunters respect nature, take their pursuit seriously and resent the maniacs who damage the reputation of all gun owners by shooting up a classroom, theater, shopping mall or political event.

Nevertheless, when a hunter who had permission to use the woods behind my brother's home set up a tree stand and hung bait this past fall, I wondered what sport there was in the endeavor. Tree stands are small platforms hunters strap to tree trunks where they can sit and wait for the animal to come along and shoot it dead. When the guy, whose name is Rocky (which he has on his license plate), said he hadn't seen any deer, I felt some odd satisfaction.


The day after the Newtown, Connecticut school shooting that claimed the lives of 20 first-graders, one of my former South Korean high school students asked me, "So you don't have a gun?"

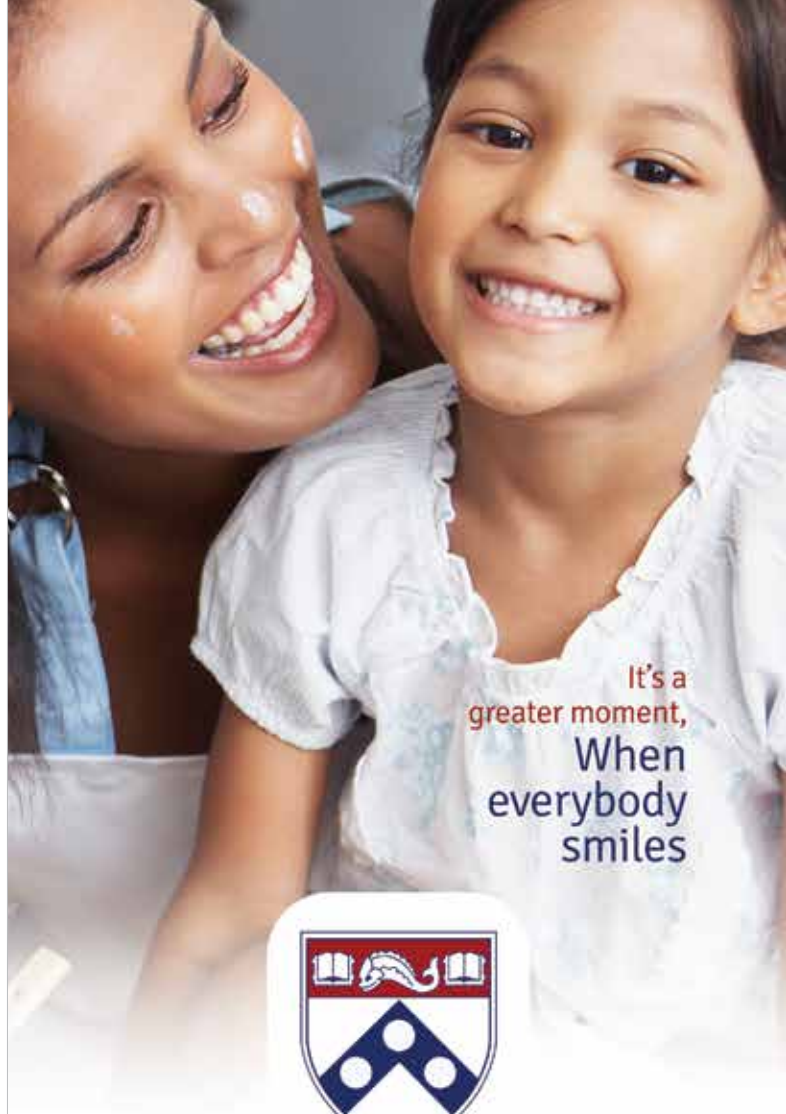
"No," I told her, "I do not own a gun."

"But don't you know anyone who's been shot?" she continued.

Such are the usual questions that my students have asked me over the years after one American shooting spree or another. Perhaps the hardest question among them has been, "Why do Americans have so many guns?"

So many — if only they knew. According to the National Institute of Justice, as of 2009, Americans owned 310 million guns (about one for every person) and a 2011 Gallup poll showed that 47 percent had at least one gun in their home. According to the Korean National Police Agency, there are currently 37,654 registered firearms in the country with a population of nearly 50 million. There's little sense to make of this, Second Amendment or not, and I didn't feed the kids any spiel about freedom or liberty (even though my state's motto is "Live free or die"). They knew it didn't make sense and that was enough for me.

Now, as I try to comprehend the gun craze here (gun and ammo sales have soared since December) and square my old friend's Facebook message, I imagine myself back in front of that classroom of Korean kids, at a loss for words. 



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BECOMING BRUCE LEE

One man's quest to follow in the footsteps of a legend

Story and Photos by Dustin Cole

● Emil Lewis stared at his 5'8", 190-pound, 31-year-old image in the mirror. A familiar face with an unfamiliar body stared back. For the first time in his life, he was overweight and out of shape. Slow, incremental lifestyle choices had caused him to steadily gain weight, culminating in a check-up where a doctor exclaimed that he "had the lungs of a six-year-old."

It's a familiar story: First, a sedentary job, then a kind wife, then a bulging stomach with what men prefer to call love handles. It escalates quickly.

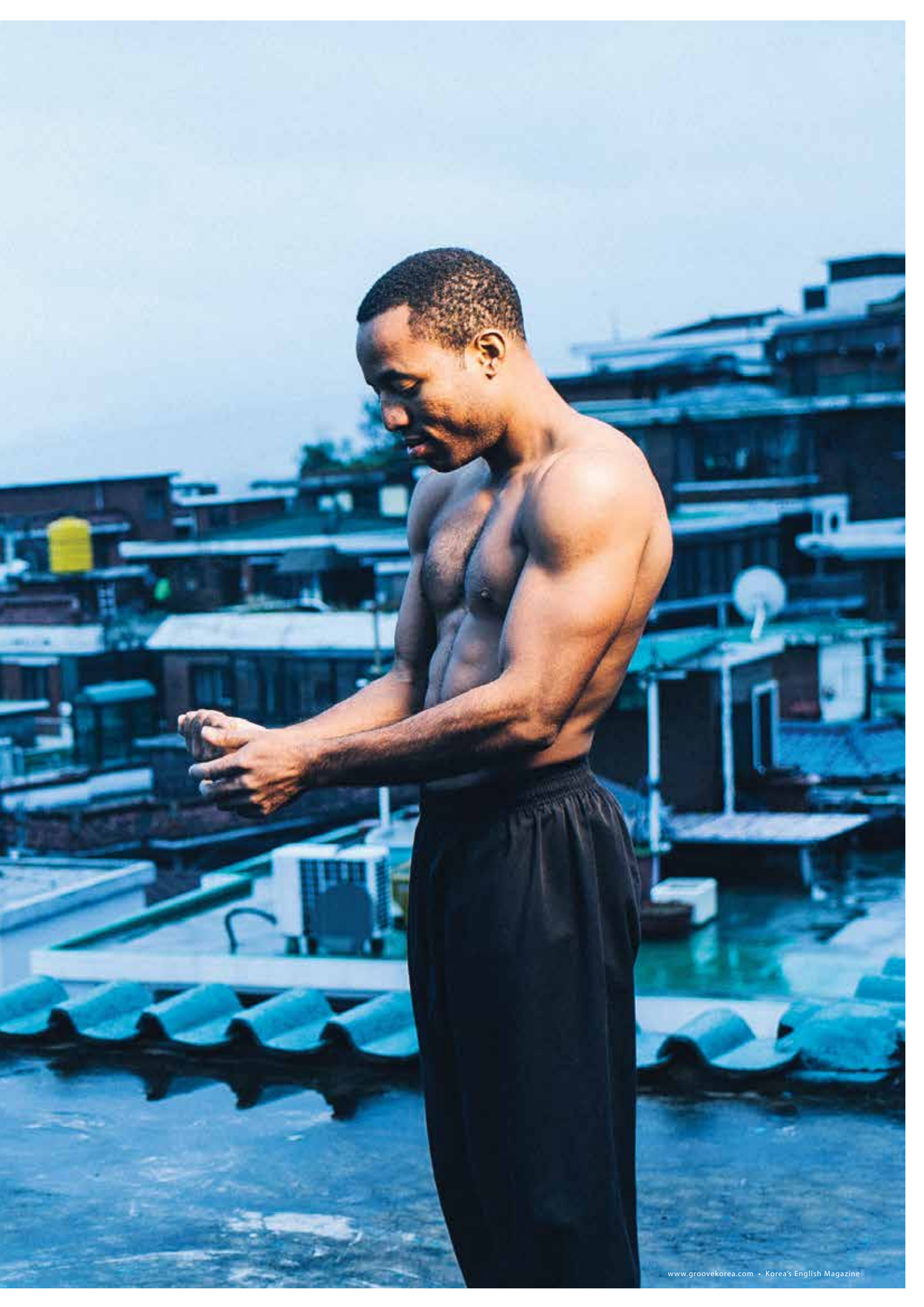
Staring in the mirror that day, Lewis decided to do something about it.

Unlike the majority of people who make the same resolution, he stuck with it. Now, seven months later, Lewis boasts

the best shape of his life. He's down 45 pounds and accomplishing feats such as one-handed, two-finger push-ups and kicking his own shoulder.

After an initial four-month regimen of diet and exercise in which he lost 40 pounds, Lewis began a project he calls "Becoming Bruce Lee": an experiment and challenge to get as close as possible to the martial arts master's physical fitness within two months.

During that time, Lewis followed Lee's exercise routines and diet and worked towards accomplishing Lee's famous physical feats. To understand the extent of this commitment, it is necessary to understand both the normalcy of Lewis and the extremity of Lee.



The players

Emil Lewis is a fairly normal chap. Born and raised in California, he met and married his Korean wife several years after joining the Air Force at age 18. He is not extreme or uncompromising, has an easy laugh, lacks affected airs, and has a mannered demeanor well past his years. During email correspondence he uses the formal "Mr. ____" long after being called by his first name. His day job as a translator in the Air Force has a low fitness requirement and he doesn't work out at a gym, preferring body weight exercises at home and a nearby school. Unlike most fitness fanatics who seem to use fitness as compensation for other shortcomings, Lewis is easy-going, confident and doesn't seem to need to show off. During our interview, rather than wearing a tight shirt (the uniform of insecure fitness-types), Lewis opted for a clean, loose-fitting t-shirt. He did, however, wear loose-fitting, well-worn martial arts pants.

Bruce Lee was (and still is) the epitome of Asian male masculinity. He dominated the martial arts industry, both on stage and in the ring. Through a severe regimen of exercise and nutrition, and a philosophy of adaptation, Lee became, indisputably, one of the most influential martial artists of all time.

He was not only skilled technically in martial arts, but believed the martial artists of his time didn't emphasize physical conditioning enough. He practiced all kinds of fitness including cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance and flexibility. He could perform such feats as 50 one-armed chin-ups and could extend, with one arm, a 75-pound barbell from his chest, straight out, to a perpendicular position with his body, and hold it for several seconds. When asked who would win in a fight between them, even the omnipotent Chuck Norris once hastily replied: "Bruce of course. Nobody can beat him."

Lewis also focused on "the correct fuel," avoiding refined flour, dairy, overeating and empty calories. He preferred Chinese food, fruits and vegetables, and took copious amounts of dietary supplements and protein drinks. He once famously said: "It's not the daily increase but daily decrease. Hack away at the unessential."

The challenge

Like a child looking up from the base of Mt. Everest, Lewis could not have chosen a loftier goal. He had no formal martial arts background. Of course, the goal was not to actually become Bruce Lee in two months, but to use him as a muse. Lee was not only a severe fighter, but a teacher and philosopher, and is an ongoing fountain of inspiration. Lewis has long looked up to Lee as a mentor and guide and has studied many of his books and films.

While Lewis isn't a fighter, he didn't have to be one to appreciate and envy Lee's physical prowess.

Lewis' exercise and nutrition regimen was extreme. He cut out most carbs and meats, and even experimented with a noxious smoothie of steak, peanut butter and milk. Daily, after an hour of stretching, he worked extensively with a punching bag, performing at least 1,000 punches and 200 kicks. He performed weight training several days a week, ran two to four miles a day, and practiced with nunchaku. Just as Bruce Lee advocated an adaptable approach to learning, or "the style of no style," Lewis both practiced Lee's exercises and developed his own. Near the end he even started experimenting with gymnastics.

Throughout the project, Lewis faced setbacks.

As with any drastic lifestyle change, friends and family were initially confused and concerned. Lewis normally enjoys a social drink, but throughout the challenge he cut back on socializing to maintain his nutrition and exercise plan. Most often, he simply declined requests to go out. (As stated earlier, however, Lewis is not a completely uncompromising man and broke his diet on one occasion for a visiting friend.) He also suffered from the problem of plateau. In any improvement, progress seems to come in spurts, and the plateaus can be depressing places. Without any direction but the films and books of a 40-years-deceased instructor, Lewis often questioned his techniques and wondered if he were making the correct improvements.

With martial arts having no part in his day job, the concept of going to work in an office and coming home to train for four or more hours

a day almost has a "Fight Club" (1999) essence to it. In the film, a discontent office worker forms a fight club to escape from his daily, monotonous, prison-like existence. With this predicament, some people start fight clubs. Some people fight digital dragons. Emil Lewis trains with nunchaku.

Lewis won't win any martial arts competitions for a while, but that's not the point. It's easy to lose sight of goals amidst the day-to-day inertia of a comfortable routine. Lewis got mired in it for a bit, but unlike most, he sprinted (four miles a day) out of it.

The reward

What did Lewis accomplish? As he says, he is "by far the most fit I've ever been." Now, he alternates jogging and sprinting miles on his four-mile runs, can easily perform two-finger one-handed push-ups, and has to be careful not to kick himself in the head. As he progressed through the challenge, not only did his skills and fitness increase, but his desire increased as well. After one particularly grueling period that he called Bruce Lee Boot Camp he stated, "Strangely enough, the result of the boot camp series actually made me want to work out more... I feel greater than ever." Lewis admits the program is not sustainable in the long run but he is committed to maintaining a healthy lifestyle with exercise and proper nutrition.

Around midday through the challenge, Lewis found himself at a local sports store, staring at a kung fu uniform. He wondered what place it might have in his modern lifestyle: "Will I be laughed at? Will this help anything?" His wife wondered why it was so expensive. After some consideration, he bought it, and never regretted it. His wife agreed. When he first tried it on, she told him it looked good. But not only did it look good, it kept Lewis from having to go through two changes of clothes a day, and he said it felt great when he was stretching and exercising. But there was another benefit: "I felt good," Lewis said when he first put it on, "I felt motivated. I felt like I had a purpose."

Like a child looking up from the base of Mt. Everest, Lewis could not have chosen a loftier goal. He began a project he calls Becoming Bruce Lee: an experiment and challenge to get as close as possible to Bruce Lee's physical fitness within two months.



'BEFORE' PICTURES

Emil Lewis just a few years ago.
(Second photo) Here is a 190-pound Emil Lewis in China.



MORE INFO:

To read more and see home videos about Emil Lewis's Becoming Bruce Lee challenge, go to becomingbrucelee.com.

get INKED

Tattoos take hold as stigmas start to fade

Story and Photos by Tey-Marie Astudillo

The act of permanently marking someone's skin with ink was specifically used for one of only two things: identifying current and former criminals, or slave ownership.

● The sound is distinct. The rhythmic buzzing of vibrations as they pulsate from a machine, through needles and into the skin. It sounds eerily similar to a dentist's drill, only here you look forward to the pain that will subsequently take place – because it's art.

As a tattoo enthusiast, I began looking into parlors soon after arriving to Korea in August 2010. I figured that living in Seoul, the modern epicenter of the country, this wouldn't be too daunting a task.

I figured wrong. After a year of depressing internet searches yielding results like "underground" and "illegal," I began to come to terms with the idea that perhaps Korea just wasn't going to be the place to get my next tattoo.

Then I came across Seoul Ink. The shop is tucked away behind a small alley just outside of Sinsa Station in Gangnam, and it had the most superb portfolio I had seen so far in Korea.

I walked in and was welcomed by the manager, Jay Lee. A U2 mixtape was playing as he led me into a large consultation area furnished with black leather couches, tattoo magazines and an enormous Jimi Hendrix painting that took up most of one wall.

"We value art over money," Lee said, which he believes is one of the main things that sets the shop apart from most other tattoo parlors in Korea.

During my visit, American Garrett Jacobs from California was in the middle of a session with tattoo artist Kil Jun.

Kil Jun spent a lot of time learning how to tattoo in the States, mainly in Virginia, where he met his late mentor Billy Eason, a well-known tattoo artist on the East Coast and also the main organizer for the annual Richmond Tattoo Arts Festival.

Kil Jun's artistic capabilities encompass a range of styles, but his favorites are traditional and color pieces. He has tattooed many Korean celebrities, including members of the famous K-pop boy band 2PM and the punk band No Brain, as well as female Korean hip-hop rapper and R&B singer Ta-

sha. He's also an award-winning tattoo artist, the most recent of which include Best Artist of the Day at the 2012 San Francisco Body Art Expo, 2nd place Best Large Black and Gray at the 2011 Nashville Tattoo Convention and 2nd place Best Artist of the Day at the 2011 San Antonio Tattoo Convention.

Confucianism views the body as a sacred gift from the ancestors, so the idea of permanently marking or modifying it in any way represents a contamination. This, of course, includes body art, no matter how beautiful or meaningful it may be to you.

At the shop, Kil Jun was in the process of finishing a zombie-themed sleeve for Jacobs, a product of more than 40 hours of work, spanning many visits over many weeks.

Jacobs sounded very happy with the final result.

"Seoul Ink is definitely one of my favorite tattoo studios I've ever had work done at, by far," said Jacobs, who has visited many studios in the United States. "The work centers are extremely sterile and orderly. All the artists and staff are awesome, from their work to laughing around with them outside during breaks."

But it's not just foreigners who frequent the shop. Lee said that because of his ability to speak multiple languages (he speaks perfect English and some Chinese as well), he's always had a high ratio of foreign clients while working in the tattoo industry here, but he also notes a significant increase in interest among the locals now, too. That's a positive sign, since tattoo culture hasn't quite hit the mainstream – yet.



The gangster connection

Tattooing gets scant recognition as a form of art in Korea. The reasons for this are complex, stemming from long-held traditions and the unfortunate associations with tattoos that have evolved through history.

As modern as the country is in many ways – from being a world leader in robotics and hybrid vehicles, to self-parking car garages, and its status as the plastic surgery capital of the world – it still holds many traditional perspectives very near and dear.

An example of this is the reverence for the Joseon Dynasty, which exists throughout the country, and particularly in Seoul, amid preserved palaces and temples interlacing megalithic buildings and city streets.

“

I was once told by an old man that my face is not a gangster but my arm is gangster. I've also had had an older man try scratching at my tattoo to see if it was real or drawn on.

— Chelsea Votel

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During the dynasty's 500-year history, the act of permanently marking someone's skin with ink was specifically used for one of only two things: identifying current and former criminals, or slave ownership. Having a tattoo during this time meant that one would be an outcast without the hope of gaining any respect or status in Korean society.

The Joseon Dynasty was also heavily based in Confucianism, the remnants of which still permeate the culture today. Confucianism views the body as a sacred gift from the ancestors, so the idea of permanently marking or modifying it in any way represents a contamination. This, of course, includes body art, no matter how beautiful or meaningful it may be to you.

Then there's always my favorite – the gangster connection.

The Kkangpae, or Korean mafia, was a predominant problem during the '60s, '70s and '80s, as the country was struggling to develop and recover from a Japanese occupation that lasted until the end of World War II, and the fallout from the Korean War. The kkangpae modeled themselves after

Japanese-style organized crime syndicates, or the yakuza, right down to their tattoos.

The yakuza are known for having tattoos with traditional Asian designs, ranging in length from those covering the arms, shoulders and torso to those covering half or all of the body (oftentimes with a line of bare skin running down the center, separating each half).

Tattoos subsequently came to represent a form of gangsterism in Korea, especially because, for a while, gangsters were the only ones getting tattooed.

Then came the strong push of Westernization and, with it, films from the U.S. and elsewhere that showed all sorts of people with tattoos as a form of self-expression rather than gang affiliation.

Discrimination and draft dodging

Nevertheless, the negative stigmas around tattoos exist today, particularly among the older generation.

Chelsea Votel, another heavily tattooed expat, has personally experienced the ramifications of this way of thinking and has even experienced a few bizarre scenarios because of it.

"I was once told by an old man that my face is not a gangster but my arm is gangster," she said. "I've also had an older man try scratching at my tattoo to see if it was real or drawn on."

Votel said people often stare at her because of her vivid, brightly-colored tattoos. This sometimes makes her uncomfortable, but she thinks it's good for the locals to see.

Not all Koreans react to it in such a negative manner.

"Younger generations (of people), especially in busy areas like Hongdae, Itaewon and Gangnam, enjoy my tattoos," she said.

Until not too long ago, Koreans with tattoos were discriminated against in the most blatant ways: They were banned from public swimming pools and jjimjilbang, or bathhouses. Rules like these have eased up, though some places still enforce them.

The military has even taken a stand against tattoos by banning those with a significant amount of body art from the required military service that young men must fulfill. Ironically, the plan backfired when those who didn't want to complete their duty began getting large tattoos just to dodge the mandatory service.

That law has since been modified so that heavily-tattooed Koreans are allowed to complete an alternative form of service instead, such as working in a public service office rather than participating in the regular combat training that most others have to go through. Yet this, too, is said to be changing.





Johnny literally transforms the body into his own personal canvas and his black and grey detail work is the best testament to his skill. When not working on people, he's still using their bodies as inspiration. He has sketches of tattooed human forms at his studio and he'd eventually like to turn them into an art exhibit.

Illegal ink and bodies of art

But perhaps the most frustrating hurdle for local businesses is a legal one.

It's a law that requires all tattoo shops to have a medical license, since the government asserts that any form of piercing the skin is akin to a surgical procedure.

The tattoo community largely ignores the requirement, and the police rarely enforce it.

"Nowadays, one of the main reasons the police bother a shop is when the shop tattoos minors," Lee, the manager of Seoul Ink, explained. "As long as you are hygienic and don't tattoo minors, there shouldn't be much problem, as no one will report you to the police."

If reported, however, the shops can face fines, be stripped of their tattoo equipment and, in several cases, the shop owners are even arrested. While this isn't very common, there are crackdowns on tattoo parlors from time to time.

Last May, the police disrupted the Ink Bomb Tattoo Convention in Seoul. The convention, attended by local and international tattoo artists and enthusiasts, was shut down early by the police on all three days because of disturbances.

The government's actions clearly haven't stopped the growing interest in tattoos among Koreans, but it has forced tattooing underground. Although there are talented artists here, it can be hard to find them.

"I was floored to see some of the artwork and portfolios from artists around South Korea," Votel said, recalling her visit to the tattoo convention. There she met tattoo artist Momento, from Inkholic Tattoo, who ended up doing her 35-hour Halloween-themed sleeve.

Many businesses struggle, having to change locations because of police shutdowns or the looming fear of a raid at any given point and time.

Despite the obstacles, there are shops and artists around the country that are becoming very well known for their phenomenal artistic abilities, such as Jeong-hwi Jeon, or as his friends call him, "Johnny."

Johnny literally transforms the body into his own personal canvas and his black and gray detail work is the best testament to his skill. When not working on people, he's still using their bodies as inspiration. He has sketches of tattooed human forms at his studio and he'd eventually like to turn them into an art exhibit.

As I left Seoul Ink, one of the artists finished tattooing an older Korean gentleman in business attire, and the serious-looking man put on his jacket and headed towards the door. Before he left, he bowed in the traditional Korean manner, and I couldn't help but think that, just maybe, the old stigmas surrounding tattoos in Korea are finally starting to fade. 🇰🇷

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I was floored to see some of the artwork and portfolios from artists around South Korea.

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— Chelsea Votel

INTERVIEW

HANA MAE LEE

WANNA SEE A DEAD BODY?

Interview with 'Pitch Perfect' star Hana Mae Lee

Interview by Ben Landau

● Hana Mae Lee is one of the breakout stars of "Pitch Perfect" — a "Glee"-meets-"Bridesmaids" procedural that, thanks to a razor-sharp script and an ensemble cast of talented young thespians including Anna Kendrick and Rebel Wilson, was one of 2012's most surprising hit comedies.

Directed by Jason Moore in his big-screen debut, the film centers around The Bellas, an all-girl a cappella group vying for a spot in the coveted International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella. After a disastrous performance in the previous year's finals (spoiler alert: projectile vomit involved), the rag-tag Bellas have a choice: either evolve with the times or risk being relegated to a cappella purgatory — a place where the girls are forced to sing yawn-inducing covers of Ace of Base in flight attendant unis forever.

As Lilly, the group's resident beat boxer, Lee plays a cross between Napoleon Dynamite, Milton Waddams (a.k.a. the stapler guy from "Office Space") and a woodland pixie.

Meek, wide-eyed and prone to hushed non-sequiturs like "Do you guys want to see a dead body?" Lee steals scene after scene with her bizarrely magnetic performance.

In addition to her nascent acting career, Lee is also a stand-up comedian (she's been known to sing traditional Korean folk songs on stage) and owns her own line of clothing and accessories called Hanamahn (meaning "just one" in Korean).

We caught up with the quirky young polymath to discuss the art of beat boxing, her animated inspiration for Lilly, and her love of K-pop.

Groove Korea: Tell us about the casting process for "Pitch Perfect."

Hana Mae Lee: For the audition, we also had to prepare a song. I sang an original Korean pansori song (traditional vocal and percussional music) and did some awesome improvising, which involved me doing a monologue of Lilly breaking up with her boyfriend. Oh, she was furious — he broke up with her via text! Horrible gesture. After that, I did some awesome "noises" with my mouth — it is incorporated in the film, where Lilly is next to Donald in the bus — since at that time it was the only "beat boxing" I knew how to do. And bam! I was cast.

You did all of your own singing, dancing and beat boxing in the movie. What kind of training was involved? Did you have any of those backgrounds going in?

I've studied dance since I was in elementary. Then when I was in high school, I used to choreograph

for skits. I especially loved hip-hop, which came in handy for the film. Singing, I grew a strong hobby for. I studied a little bit in high school, but never K-pop professional. I sing Korean pansori in some of my comedy sets.

As far as the beat boxing goes, I was pretty much a novice. The studio set me up with DJ Spencer, and he taught me all the cool beats.

We shot in Baton Rouge, LA, and had three weeks of rehearsal before filming. Every day we had four hours of dance and two to three hours of singing. It was like band/dance camp.

For those who haven't seen the film, describe your character Lilly. Who or what did you use as inspiration when bringing Lilly to life?

Lilly is known as the quiet one of The Bellas. But, she is one to speak her mind fully. Even though she is soft-spoken, she is extremely confident and competent; an extremely layered character where you would really want to read an autobiography of her. By the end of the film, Lilly becomes this aca-awesome beat boxer. She helps bring the group color — and yes, that pun was intended — and helps make The Bellas aca-amazing.

I loved playing Lilly. She was definitely a character that stood out when I read the script. My inspirations to bring Lilly to life were MTV's "Daria" and Tim Burton's "Nightmare Before Christmas".

Lilly has some incredible one-liners in the movie. Which is your favorite? Was anything improvised?

(Hana laughs.) "Do you want to see a dead body?" is my favorite line. I have a couple of outtakes on the "Pitch Perfect" DVD that I did improvise, a Hana Mae Lee exclusive: "I like to watch babies cry, on my leisure time," and "I like it when pretty boys dress up in drag and perform for me." But for most of my lines I stuck to the script. Kay Cannon, our screenwriter, had some epic lines for Lilly and I was excited to execute them.

What is Hanamahn? How did it start?

Hanamahn is a clothing and accessory line I created back in 2009. It means "just one" in Korean. I started out with wire-wrapped rings and all my rings are one-of-a-kind pieces. After I make a collection, there are no more recreations of the certain novelties I use. Very special. Very detailed. Every piece is woven by hand and specific. My apparel is all about the confident, fierce woman who loves being looked at.

As a designer, do you take any inspiration from Korean fashion, or Asian fashion in general? Any favorite Korean trends or brands at the moment?

I absolutely am inspired by Korea. I love recreating the hanbok (traditional Korean dress). I made this "paradise" jacket in 2010, where I took a vintage silk hanbok and made it into a fierce, shoulder-defined cropped jacket. That was one of my favorite pieces.

Also, for the "Pitch Perfect" premiere I made my outfit. The skirt was a reconstructed vintage silk hanbok, and the top was an Italian lamb leather extravaganza! As far as Korean trends go, oh my God, can I just openly admit right now that I love Korean fashion? All the clothes I see on the K-pop stars are absolutely epic. 2NE1 and Big Bang, wow.

What role does your Korean background play in your life?

Work hard, work hard, work hard. Think you did good? Do better.

Any dreams of someday crossing over into the Korean market? You obviously have the singing chops.

Big Bang, you looking for a girl to be in your group? Holla!

You seem to have many outlets for your creativity. Is there any one in particular that you'd consider your passion?

I have passion for all of them — that's why I do it. Without passion, you're just on cruise control. Total snore, total bore.

If you could spend a day as any person — past or present, real or fictional, cartoon character, deity or other — who would you choose and why?

Picasso and Alexander McQueen. Picasso, because I just want to know how it feels to have so many ideas and to execute them so beautifully. It's so interesting to me.

Alexander McQueen, because he was my inspiration to become a fashion designer. He mixed art with clothes and did it so well.

Finally, what's next for Hana Mae Lee?

More great movies, more great TV shows and more Hanamahn! 🇰🇷



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Work hard, work hard,
work hard. Think you did
good? Do better.

—Hana Mae Lee

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INTERVIEW WITH KALA SÉRAPHIN, BELLY DANCER

Interview by Wilfred Lee / Photos by Corey Malcolm Lajeunesse and Ryan Mortinson

● Kala Séraphin is a noted belly dancer and writer whose vivacious spirit has brightened the Seoul arts community for the four years that she has been here. Kala joins Artist's Journey's Wilfred Lee to talk about her winding path around the world, what inspires her in Seoul, and where she is heading next.

"It has been the most fulfilling adventure in my life. What I loved about it is that, yes, it physically engaged me, but mentally and spiritually as well. It kept challenging me. I found that dancing was the best way for me to be more spiritually connected to the universe. Dancing is praying in motion."

—Kala Séraphin

Groove Korea: How did you come to Korea originally?

Kala Séraphin: I always had itchy feet because, coming from a military family, we move a lot, generally every four years. So after I finished my degree, I literally just closed my eyes and (closes her eyes and points), "All right, Korea! Let's see what you've got!"

And how did you get into dancing?

I was bored. I was living in Ilsan. Lake Park? Gorgeous, but you can't always go to Lake Park. Shopping? Not my thing. Drinking? There's just so much of that a person can indulge in. So I wanted to try something new. Come on, I'm in a new country, so let's just throw myself out there. I found classes for belly dance, and so I was like, all right, let's try this belly dance thing. And I did, and here I am today, performing and teaching and just enjoying every moment of it.


What was it about belly dancing that made you stick to it?

In this environment, I found a lot of people are just temporary. A lot of foreigners who come here, they're young, they're exploring, and I understand that. I don't know why (belly dancing) stuck to me, but my body just said, "Yes! This is great! Can I get more, please?" It has been the most fulfilling adventure in my life. What I loved about it is that, yes, it physically engaged me, but mentally and spiritually as well. It kept challenging me. I found that dancing was the best way for me to be more spiritually connected to the universe. Dancing is praying in motion.

So let's talk about your website, storiesonfire.com, which launched in October. You write, and you say that you stopped writing for a while, but just got back into it. How did that happen?

When I was a teen, I was always just writing and writing, but when I hit about 17 or 18 it just stopped. The stories just didn't come. And then, recently, it just started up again. I picked up a paper and pen, I let out that first story and it was just like (big sigh), "That feels better." And then more came and came and came. Where these stories are leading, the novel that will come out of that, that's been on my mind for many, many years. For the longest time I was like, "Forget it, I'm not touching you," but since the stories have been coming out, I've said, "Okay, I'm getting there."

What about living in Korea has influenced you?

I have thrown myself into so many situations. I have encountered some people who come to Korea and live in their little holes, in such limited experiences. But for me, I decided that any time anyone said, "Hey Kala, you want to do this?" I'd say, "Okay!" There are times where I've said, "Whoa, should not have done that," but these are all things which influenced me, and have helped me to grow and stretch out. I've learned not to say "no" with a big, capital N. There is no absolute "No!" in my life anymore. I'm going to live my life fully, and whatever comes my way, if it feels right for me, I'll do it. 

ABOUT THIS COLUMN:

Artist's Journey's Wilfred Lee and Alison Hjelseth bring you daily doses of inspiration, including weekly podcasts featuring artists from around the globe. Learn more at facebook.com/myartistsjourney or www.artistsjourney.org.

“

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—Kala Séraphin

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MORE INFO

After dancing and teaching for four years at Eshe's Dream Dance Studio as part of the troupes Navah, Mahadevi and Sultana, Kala Séraphin is off to India for new adventures. Keep track of her writing via www.storiesonfire.com. For any questions or comments, or to submit a piece of art, contact her at kalaonfire@gmail.com.

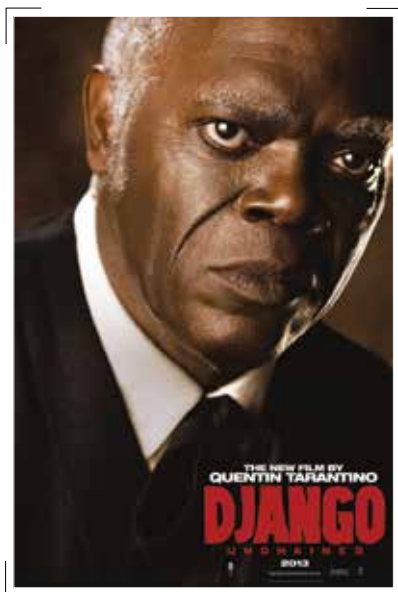
AT THE BOX OFFICE

THE BIG SCREEN

By Dean Crawford

Django Unchained

Directed by **Quentin Tarantino**



March
21 Drama/Western
165 minutes

● With his snappy dialogue and disjointed narratives, Quentin Tarantino is one of the most iconic directors of the 20th century. Whether through Ezekiel 25:17 in "Pulp Fiction" (1994) or "Stuck in the Middle with You" in "Reservoir Dogs" (1992), he shaped a generation and entered popular culture like no other director has. Having battled the Nazis, Tarantino is again tackling a sensitive subject by focusing on slavery in "Django Unchained" (2012).

Oscar-winner Jamie Foxx plays Django, a slave in captivity working two years prior to the American Civil War. Django is given a chance at freedom after he is purchased by a bounty hunter named Shultz, played by another Oscar-winner, Christoph Waltz. All Django has to do is lead Shultz to the vicious Brittle Brothers so he can collect a bounty on their heads. In return, Django will have his freedom, and the chance to rescue his wife from the plantation owned by the evil Calvin Candie, played by Leonardo DiCaprio.

As you might expect from a Tarantino movie, the film is stylish and the dialogue slick, not to mention at times very, very violent. Mandingo fights, torture, exploding heads, dogs ripping off limbs, as well as multiple uses of the "n-word" are par for the course, so much so that DiCaprio had some serious reservations about taking on the film. He told Vibe magazine that "some of my

P R E V I E W

questions were about the amount of violence, the amount of racism, the explicit use of certain language. It was hard for me to wrap my head around it."

But considering some of the controversy the film has created, I was expecting it to be a lot worse. I found "Kill Bill" (2003) much more gruesome. However, whereas "Kill Bill" was clearly over the top and never meant to be taken seriously, "Django Unchained" is grounded in reality, which blurs the line between what is either a cinematic homage or a serious drama making a statement about slavery. A lot of the controversy was directed at the script, which was enhanced by some brutal performances from DiCaprio and, in particular, Samuel L. Jackson.

Some reviews have said that Jackson's performance was over the top, but I thought it was one of his best, up there with "Pulp Fiction" and "Jungle Fever" (1991). After seeing the film, I was shocked that he didn't get an Oscar nomination for his role as the duplicitous house slave, Steven. Perhaps the subject matter had something to do with it. In no way does the film shy away from the grim portrayal of America's past, and in no way does it stylize the brutality of the slave trade.

"Django Unchained" may well be tough to watch for some, but it is also an example of a director at the peak of his talent.

Shame

Directed by **Steve McQueen**



March
1 Drama
101 minutes

● There are several different reasons behind the release dates that films are given by distributors. In the United States, blockbusters are generally given prime slots over the holidays. Oscar contenders tend to be released towards the end of the year, as it is thought that voters have short attention spans and it is better to have a film lingering in their minds when awards season comes around.

Then there is the idea that when it comes to territorial releases, certain countries (i.e. the U.S.) might benefit from a later release date, as the risk of online piracy is so high. Prime examples of this would be "The Avengers" (2012) and "Skyfall" (2012), which were both released in Asia weeks before North America. However, I have no idea what the thinking is behind the March release of Steve McQueen's "Shame" (2011), which is coming to Korea a full 18 months after being shown everywhere else.

I wouldn't usually bother with previewing a film that has potentially been seen elsewhere, but I'm a big fan of McQueen and feel the film needs another nudge in case people have missed it.

"Shame" is the story of Brandon, played by the excellent Michael Fassbender, a 30-something New Yorker, businessman and sex addict. He is successful in his

P R E V I E W

professional life, but is emotionally void when it comes to relationships with his family and friends. The only intimacy he shares is through call girls and porn sites. The film shows his struggle to keep his life under control after his sister, Carey Mulligan, comes to stay.

McQueen and Fassbender previously collaborated on the 2008 art house film, "Hunger" (2008). The actor excelled as the emaciated IRA member Bobby Sands, and the film was not only one of the best of the year, but one of the best directing debuts full stop.

Again, in "Shame" Fassbender doesn't hold back physically, performing a number of simulated sex acts and not shying away from full-frontal nudity. (Much like the shock of some of this year's Oscar omissions, I was surprised that Fassbender's "fassbender" didn't get a supporting nod of its own.)

"Shame" is a bold, unflinching and, at times, moving piece of filmmaking. The director's trademarks are there, with long, improvised single takes and some gorgeous floating camerawork and cinematography. I did feel the film suffered a little from the weight of expectation, but it is still a solid film, if at times a little difficult to watch. If you haven't seen it yet and you like your films serious and with lots of sex, go and see it.

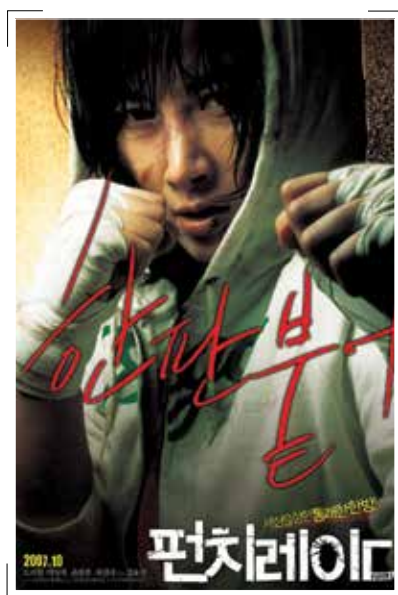
KOREAN DVD CORNER

THE SMALL SCREEN

By Dean Crawford / Daniel Vorderstrasse

Punch Lady (펀치레이디)

Directed by Kang Hyo-jin



Rated
15 Action/Drama
121 minutes

R E V I E W

● I hate to admit it, but I've been slightly disappointed with a lot of the Korean films I've seen in the last few months. After scratching my head, wondering where the next Kim Ki-duk or Park Chan-wook were, I thought my wait for a great film was over when a friend of mine suggested I watch a film called "Punch," (2011), which had been a success at several major Asian film festivals.

I eagerly accepted a copy of this feel-good film on DVD and was presented with the story of a mixed martial artist who physically and verbally abuses his wife on a daily basis.

He then kills her ex-boyfriend and accepts a challenge to fight his wife in the ring so he can kill her legally.

If you think this sounds like an odd premise to a feel-good film, you'd be right. Instead of Lee Han's "Punch," I'd been lent Kang Hyo-jin's "Punch Lady" (2007). Mistake or practical joke? Have a look at the plot and decide for yourself.

As a child, Ha-eun witnesses her father beating a burglar to a pulp. He then inadvertently kills himself by falling off the bridge where he is beating said burglar. Growing up a frail and fearful woman, she finds herself in a relationship with an MMA fighter who uses her as a punching bag and forces their daughter to watch.

Ha-eun finally snaps and challenges her husband to a match, which will keep her out of jail after he presses charges against her for a bout of self-defense. The winner will not only win bragging rights, but also custody of their child and the house they own. Winning seems near impossible when a case of mistaken identity leads Ha-eun to train with a math teacher with no fighting experience whatsoever.

I'm always willing to suspend disbelief during a film; I mean, I was willing to believe Don Cheadle was from England in "Ocean's Eleven" (2001), but this film takes the cake. How on earth are we supposed to believe that this fight would even take place, let alone fill a stadium?

The first two-thirds of the film are pointless. Until the final fight, the film is filler with the odd interaction to show Ha-eun as a vulnerable individual, ensuring our support for her in the final fight.

However, we found out in the first 10 minutes that the husband is a dick, and we were always going to root for her, unless you are a misogynistic arse. And the film does its best to imply that Korea is full of them.

If the film managed to raise awareness of a serious issue prevalent in society today, then great. But as a piece of entertainment? No thanks.

Quick (퀵)

Directed by Jo Beom-gu



Rated
15 Action/Comedy
115 minutes

R E V I E W

● Grossing over 4 billion won in its first week, this 2011 blockbuster provides an adrenaline-packed rush through the streets of Seoul. In the movie, Han Gi-su (Lee Min-ki), a once-popular playboy in a motorcycle gang, now earns an honest living as an express motorcycle delivery driver.

One day, Gi-su delivers a package to a building, but he doesn't know that the package is rigged with a bomb, and he later watches as the building burns to the ground. Not knowing it was he who delivered the bomb, he returns to work. In fact, Gi-su is just about the fastest deliveryman in the city, so if one is in need of someone to deliver lots of bombs in a short period of time, then Gi-su would be the man for the job. But how do you convince someone to do that?

Gi-su's next job is to escort a singer (Kang Ye-won), who just happens to be his ex-girlfriend, to a concert where her band is scheduled to perform. As she straps his helmet to her head, she inadvertently triggers a countdown for a bomb. Shortly afterward, Gi-su gets a phone call. If he doesn't do as he's told, his now-famous ex will get her head blown off.

Gi-su's first instruction is to deliver a package in a certain amount of time and he's successful. He then gets instructions to deliver subsequent packages. He complies. It turns out that all the packages are bombs and people

get blown up all around the city! You get the picture.

As the bombs wreak havoc throughout Seoul, we learn the backstory. The bombings are part of a massive cover-up involving a secret government project that had the carpet pulled out from under it. The company in charge of the project ran out of money and borrowed heavily through back channels and shady deals with the yakuza (Japanese mafia). The heads of the company are killed in the first bombing, and the subsequent bombings kill more people who were involved in the project.

It's a run-of-the-mill action/thriller that's also a comedy, and that's actually where it runs into trouble. It's hard to take the movie seriously because of the slapstick characters (think Jason Borne with a dash of Zoolander). It should either have been an action-thriller or slapstick — not both. Trying to blend the two genres detracts from the entertainment value of the film.

Unfortunately, the special effects are nothing to behold. It's obviously a high-budget film with numerous explosions, computer graphics and countless destroyed automobiles, but it doesn't come together well. Some effects are like anime. All that said, it's not a terrible film. It's obviously not without its faults. It will keep you entertained for a couple of hours, and isn't that the point?





SEOUL'S BEST BULGOGI

Foodies from Japan, Korea and China scour Seoul for their respective country's best eats

Sub-par sushi, bulgogi, and sweet and sour pork — it's everywhere. In your local supermarket, at the mall and in the dozens of buffet restaurants scattered throughout Seoul. And it's not cheap, either. So what's a foodie to do? To find the best sushi, bulgogi, and sweet and sour pork, Groove Korea tagged along with foodies from Japan, Korea and China as they scoured Seoul for their respective country's best eats.

This month we're on the hunt for Seoul's best bulgogi.

Our judges on this outing were Naomi Sonobe from Sapporo, Japan, Hong Weiwei from Xiamen, China, Claire Jung from Seoul, and Jung Sun-ran from Seoul. They visited several of Seoul's finest bulgogi restaurants and judged each in varying categories on a scale of 0-5.



PERSONAL SCOREBOARD

Naomi	3.6	Weiwei	3.6
Sun-young	3.7	Claire	3.4

Traditional meets modern in this unique joint.
American pop fills the air.

Small Happy in the Garden

(뜰안의 작은 행복)

Address: Ehwa building 1F, 28-3, Jeong-dong 1 street, Jung gu, Seoul
Contact: (02) 975-3429

Traditional meets modern in this unique joint. American pop fills the air as customers sip wine and dine on bulgogi. The restaurant is cozy with warm, funky lamps hanging from the ceiling.

They serve their bulgogi with a good helping of vegetables – spring onions, pumpkin and mushrooms – which is a major plus for veggie lovers. The set we ordered came with a lot of side dishes. The actual bulgogi, however, was more akin to a beef stir-fry than the traditional dish. The meat had a mild flavor with a spicy kick at the end. It wasn't too greasy. Rather than having us cook the bulgogi at our table, the completed dish was brought out when it was ready.

Oddly, Small Happy in the Garden doesn't serve its bulgogi until the end of the meal. Some of the judges filled up on side dishes before the bulgogi was even brought to the table.

The set we ordered was 25,000 won (\$23), but Small Happy in the Garden also has some lunch sets for around 10,000 won, making it an affordable lunchtime option.

Criticism: The service was lacking and the order the dishes came out in was confusing.

Praise: The décor was fresh and modern, making the place a comfortable spot to hang out in. The highlight of the meal was the variety of vegetables served.

Who: Small Happy in the Garden is a nice, modern place to have a large, healthy meal. Don't go here if you're looking for traditional Korean bulgogi or atmosphere.



PERSONAL SCOREBOARD

Naomi	n/a	Weiwei	2.4
Sun-young	2.2	Claire	3

Ancient Taste is a meat-lover's joint. Servings are cheap and each one is enough to feed two.

Ancient Taste Seoul Bulgogi

(옛맛 서울 불고기)

Address: 15-4, Changchun dong, Mapo area, Seoul
Phone: (02) 336-9371

Ancient Taste is a much more traditional experience, for better or for worse. They don't put much effort into décor; the main dining room is crowded and smoky, with an open kitchen and waiters navigating the narrow alleyways between tables.

Ancient Taste is a meat-lover's joint. Servings are cheap (15,000 won) and each one is enough to feed two. The bulgogi is tender and mildly flavored — aside from considerable spiciness. Here, customers cook their own meat at tableside grills. The meal is served with traditional sides. Our waitress recommended we put vegetables under the bulgogi on the grill to keep it from burning. The sides were okay, but the kimchi wasn't fully marinated. It was too crunchy and the pepper paste was too fresh.

Ancient Taste is popular among Seoulites; we had to get a paper ticket and wait in line to get inside. The dining room was packed and hectic. Amusingly, one of the old men in the kitchen was dancing as he cooked.

Criticism: The dining room is crowded and smoky, and the food is uninspired.

Praise: You won't find more meat for the price. The bulgogi came in mounds, and would satisfy the most ravenous carnivore.

Who: Ancient Taste is a restaurant for someone who wants good value, tasty if unadventurous food, and an unpretentious atmosphere.



PERSONAL SCOREBOARD

Naomi	4.2	Weiwei	3.2
Sun-young	3.2	Claire	3.3

The beef here was mild and sweet and came with five light side dishes.

Ondal (온달)

Address: 177 Walkerhill-ro, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul
Phone: (02) 450-4518

Ondal offers an upscale take on southern-style bulgogi. The décor of the restaurant is traditional Korean. A few paintings hang on the wall and customers can eat in private rooms.

The bulgogi here is a style from the city of Gwangyang on the south coast. That means it's cooked over charcoal, without a lot of liquid. The beef here was mild and sweet and came with five light side dishes. White radish kimchi, carrots, leaves and cucumbers gave the whole meal a light, fresh feel. Ondal also serves a vegetarian version of bulgogi made from beans and egg.

Ondal is located in the Walkerhill, a 5-star hotel, so we expected the restaurant to be pretty formal. The price for the bulgogi set is more than at other restaurants (60,000 won). But for that you get food made by a chef with a vision, professional wait staff, and a clean and comfortable atmosphere. The private rooms are a plus, too, if you want a private meal.

Criticism: The price tag is steep compared to other restaurants' and the atmosphere can feel too formal.

Praise: The restaurant is clean and comfortable, the waitstaff are professional, and the meal is light and fresh.

Who: Ondal is a bulgogi restaurant for businesspeople or diners who want to spend a lot more for an upscale dining experience.



PERSONAL SCOREBOARD

Naomi	n/a	Weiwei	n/a
Sun-young	2.9	Claire	3.6

The walls were all concrete and the restaurant was largely dark and gray.

Samchung Hwa (삼청화)

Address: 112 Sokyuck-dong, Jongno, Seoul
Phone: (02) 733-8273

You have to walk down a small cobblestone-paved alleyway to get to this joint. As we walked through the alley, we imagined a cozy little hideaway where we could hunker down and enjoy our dinner. Unfortunately, the restaurant was more akin to a cave. The walls were all concrete and the restaurant was largely dark and gray.

Samchung Hwa serves Seoul-style bulgogi, which is very different from bulgogi from the South. This bulgogi is served in a stone bowl with lots of liquid. It's more like a stew than a meat dish. It came with fresh vegetables – radish, kimchi and bean sprouts. It was also served with a side of squid. The bulgogi was quite spicy – too spicy, even, for one of our judges.

The food here was salty and had the chemical taste of additives. We also tried the soft tofu stew, which was not too impressive. The clams and seafood inside didn't seem fresh.

The restaurant seemed to be popular with other Asian travelers and women. They also serve some fusions dishes, most notable dalk galbi carbonara.

Criticism: The décor could use some serious TLC, and the food seems to be made from poor-quality ingredients.

Praise: The food is cheap and the waitstaff are friendly.

Who: It's an informal place that might make a decent stop if you're in the area.



PERSONAL SCOREBOARD

Naomi	n/a	Weiwei	1.8
Sun-young	1.1	Claire	3.0

For the price (19,800 won), we felt like we'd been ripped off. Side dishes were sparse.

MuiMui (무이무이)

Address: 653-4, Sinsadong, Gangnam, Seoul
Phone: (02) 515-3981

With high ceilings and grand windows, MuiMui's interior is the opposite of the previous restaurant's. The décor is modern, with ceramic Korean tableware. The scale of the interior gives a feeling of freedom. It really feels more like a European café than a Korean restaurant. There's a smoking area upstairs, and unfortunately smoke does waft down into the dining area.

The bulgogi here is served "dup-bap," on top of rice. We mixed it up like bibimbap. They use Korean beef for their bulgogi, which bumps the price of the dish up. Unfortunately the bulgogi is nothing special. For the price (19,800 won), we felt like we'd been ripped off. Side dishes were sparse.

The wait staff here seems somewhat daft. The restaurant lists more than 50 dishes on its menu, which may account for the unimpressive meal we got. Jack of all trades, master of none? They'd be better off narrowing their focus.

Criticism: The food here is uninspired and expensive.

Praise: The atmosphere is unique.

Who: Because of its interesting atmosphere, it might make a nice dinner spot for a couple celebrating an anniversary. Unless you're a fan of actor Jung Woo-sung, who is rumored to frequent the restaurant, we'd recommend choosing somewhere else.



PERSONAL SCOREBOARD

Naomi	n/a	Weiwei	3.0
Sun-young	3.1	Claire	4.1

What the restaurant lacks in decorative creativity it makes up for in its food.

Jang Sa Rang (장사랑)

Address: 624-47, Sinsadong, Gangnam, Seoul
Phone: (02) 546-9994

This basement restaurant is simply decorated with Korean art objects and traditional paper. There's nothing pretentious about Jang Sa Rang, and its hominess made us feel comfortable.

What the restaurant lacks in decorative creativity it makes up for in its food. Unique combinations of ingredients left us feeling surprised and fulfilled. Their bulgogi is the charcoal-grilled type, served dry. It's paired with sliced raw mushrooms and deep-fried seaweed. The taste combination was truly something special. The bulgogi was served with broiled peanuts, kimchi and anchovies. Everything was prepared with expertise and very tasty.

The male waitstaff here were friendly and good-looking. The restaurant has a rustic charm.

Criticism: The restaurant closes at 9:30 p.m., which is unusually early considering most people don't get out of the office until after 7 p.m.

Praise: The restaurant's food is creatively prepared and delicious. The waitstaff are friendly and the rustic charm of the place made us feel comfortable.

Who: We would recommend Jang Sa Rang to anyone looking to have a great meal that doesn't last late into the night.

The best bulgogi in Seoul

RESULTS

1

Small Happy
3.6

2

Ondal
3.5

3

Jang Sa Rang
3.4

PERSONAL CHOICES

Naomi: Ondal (4.2/5), Small Happy (3.6/5), Jang Sa Rang (n/a)
Sun-young: Jang Sa Rang (3.8/5), Small Happy (3.7/5), Ondal (3.2/5)
Weiwei: Small Happy (3.6/5), Ondal (3.2/5), Jang Sa Rang (3/5)
Claire: Jang Sa Rang (4.1/5), Small Happy (3.4/5), Ondal (3.3/5)

MEET THE JUDGES



Naomi Sonobe

Age: 33
From: Sapporo, Japan
In Seoul: Works as a freelance translator
What else: Sonobe came to Korea in January 2009 and is married to a Korean. She enjoys most Korean food, except beondegi (boiled silkworm larvae) and anything very spicy.



Hong Weiwei

Age: 27
From: Xiamen, China
In Seoul: Chinese PR associate
What else: Hong met her Korean husband at university in Beijing in 2007 and the two married in 2011. She is not fond of spicy and salty foods, so most Korean cuisine is out of the question.



Yang Sun-young

Age: 25
From: Seoul
In Seoul: Jack of all trades – translating, writing, blogging
What else: Yang was born in Seoul, but spent most of her youth overseas. She is a vegetarian but was excited when asked to participate in this project.



Claire Jung

Age: 25
From: Seoul
In Seoul: Works at Groove Korea
What else: Claire likes eating and enjoys the challenge of finding a good restaurant. She has worked at Groove since graduating university and completed a year of school in Shanghai.



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IS THIS THE BEST FRIED CHICKEN IN THE CITY?

What it is that
makes The Coco so special

OFF THE
RADAR

Column by Mishka Grobler

● The “Coco” in many Hispanic countries is the name given to an irrational fear, equivalent to the boogeyman. In Korea, it is simply a place to get the best fried chicken in the city. Now, now, I hear you say, fried chicken joints are as common as bar brawls in Club FF on a Saturday night. What makes The Coco so special?

For starters, they serve their beer in 400 ml and 700 ml frosted glasses — gorgeously icy, frosted glasses with a slice of lemon on top. The food menu consists of a wide variety of chicken, which is served in a bowl and rested on a large helping of sliced, crispy potato chips. This is accompanied by a side of ranch sauce of their own creation, as well as the standard spicy red sauce served at most chicken places.

The favorite by far is the “diet” option. By diet they mean deboned and then deep-fried in oil. Instead of the rock-hard crust usually coating your white meat, The Coco’s chicken is slightly spiced, and garnished.

Regardless of the obvious health issues, this is the best chicken I’ve tasted in Seoul. If the fear of keeling over with a heart attack is too much for you, though, get a portion of seafood nulgijitang (누룽지탕) instead — your own pot of singed rice, vegetables and seafood in broth for around the same price. Or, go the extra-healthy route and opt for a salad, or their varied fruit platter.

Be warned: dishes here are made for sharing. The portions are huge, pitchers of beer are available, and a big screen alternating between K-pop and hip-hop provides the entertainment. This is not the place to go to for a quiet night out. It is, however, the place to go for a cheap evening. The dishes range from around 12,000 to 20,000 won (\$11 to \$18 -- for two people sharing), while a 2-liter pitcher sets you back 9,000 won. The prices, and atmosphere, make the slightly random location worth the trip. The Coco is open from 5pm ‘til late. 🍷

GETTING THERE:

From Yaksu Station, walk straight out of Exit 3 for about 100 m. The Coco will be on your right. Alternatively, from Cheonggu Station, turn left out of Exit 3 and walk straight for about 200 m. The Coco will be on your left.



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Cumin

URBS
& SPICES

Column by Read Urban / Photo by Brenda Gottsabend

Find this and other recipes at www.groovekorea.com

PARTING WORDS FROM URBS

● My time in Korea is slowly coming to an end, and with it my time with Groove. I wanted to leave with a few tips to make everyone here — those who have just arrived as well as the lifers — more successful in the kitchen. These are just a few things that have helped me immensely during my time in Korea. I hope they help you.

Make your own cheese

One of the first articles I wrote focused on how to make cheese at home. It is an easy recipe, and there are many variations online. Lemon juice and milk are the only ingredients, and you can find cheesecloth-like products in any large market. Armed with a simple cheese recipe, you will always have access to a quality ingredient and no excuse not to make your world-famous lasagna.

Buy whole spices

Next time you make it out to one of the many foreign food markets, stock up on whole spices. They are cheap, last a long time and make a huge difference in your food. Cumin, black pepper, fennel, coriander, cinnamon, etc. The whole form of each of these spices is a different beast compared to their ground counterpart. Make sure to pick up a cheap mortar and pestle or spice grinder. I use my bullet blender in a pinch when I need to grind up a batch.

Make yogurt

You can get yogurt almost anywhere in Seoul, but there is nothing quite like homemade yogurt. All you need is milk and some live yogurt cultures. I know, it sounds scary, but most yogurts have active cultures in them. I use the Denmark brand as my yogurt starter and I haven't looked back. Again, there are tons of recipes online and you don't need a machine. Draining your finished yogurt in cheesecloth will create a thicker consistency, something similar to Greek yogurt.

Bake bread

There are a handful of great bakeries scattered across Seoul, but if you are one of the lucky ones with access to an oven (however small it might be), take the time to learn how to bake. Not cookies, brownies and cakes, but get those hands in some bread dough. Mark Bitmann and Jim Lahey's No-knead Bread recipe is a great place to get started.

Bake your own bread



Learn to love the skillet

Let's face it. Most of you are going to spend a lot of time using a two-burner gas stove and you will be lucky if you have a small broiler built in. Stop lamenting over the loss of homemade lasagna and meatloaf. How often were you going to pull out your mom's recipe anyways? Once, twice? Get into Bolognese, fried chicken, or pan-seared steaks with rich French sauces. If you love baking, try making flat bread on a skillet. Switch from roasts to braises. Don't get discouraged by a lack of tools at your disposal – get creative.

Experiment

We are exposed to some weird stuff here in Korea, and that is a good thing. Get out of your comfort zone and start messing around with new stuff in the kitchen. Fruit and vegetables are cheap when they are in season, so try some new greens in your favorite salad. Braise a weird-looking root vegetable. You might not get a hit every time, but you would be surprised at what you can come up with.

It is easy to give up on cooking, lose focus or not be inspired, but it is important that we keep learning in the

kitchen. I am off to find inspiration in new places and lose myself in food again. It is an exciting time for me, but also an exciting time for Seoul. There are more ingredients available here every day. Attention to quality, affordability and new flavors are at the forefront of a new culinary landscape in Korea. I implore you to go get lost in it. 🍳

There are a handful of great bakeries scattered across Seoul, but if you are one of the lucky ones with access to an oven (however small it might be), take the time to learn how to bake.

[illegible]

DAEGU'S DELIGHTS

The best eats the city has to offer

Column by Sean Choi

● Daegu is a hotbed of conservatism, but it's also the location of Korea's first noraebang (karaoke room) and its populace is more open-minded than most give them credit for. Its nightlife is bursting at the seams in some places and foodies will have a field day here. Despite some of its unique cultural activities, many Koreans and expats alike still scoff at the idea of spending a night here. "Ugly"; "gray"; "why Daegu?" — tell a Korean that you're going to Daegu for the weekend and that's what you can expect to hear in response.

I spent 20 years of my life in the City of Apples, as it is known — and I'm here to challenge some of the common perceptions about this city and its people. I'm going to help you rediscover some of the city's best attractions, restaurants and night spots.

We welcome feedback — email editor@groovekorea.com with praise, criticism or suggestions.



Nureunguksu

A unique noodle made from a mixture of flour and soy, served as a soup with vegetables

It is commonly believed that Japan is the ramen capital of the world. But according to the World Instant Noodles Association — yes it actually exists — in 2009, Korea was the largest ramen-consuming country on Earth. The average person consumed 71 bowls of ramen that year. Second was Indonesia (57), followed by Japan (44), China (33) and Taiwan (32).

Daegu is famous for its love of noodles and is estimated to be the largest flour-consuming city in Korea. Until the late '80s, Daegu produced more than 50 percent of the nation's noodles.

Nureunguksu (nureun noodles) was born in an environment in the 1970s when rice shortages were not uncommon. During the era, there was a movement called "mixed grain promotion" that, as the name suggests, promoted the consumption of mixed grains instead of rice. Daeguites found a way to mix flour and beans together to make noodles, and nureunguksu was born.

It became an instant hit for its price (about 3,000 won per serving) and savoriness. Compared with whole-flour noodles, nureun noodles are softer and richer in flavor. The broth is made with anchovies, kelp and vegetables. It is served with leek, green pumpkin and cabbage. You will find a wide selection of small nureunguksu restaurants at Seomun Market.

Where to get it: Seomun Market

Address: Daegu, Jung-gu, Daeshin-dong 115-378



Mungtigi

Marinated raw beef

Picture this: You finally find the bbq restaurant you had been searching for, but after finding your seat you notice that there are no grills on the tables. It seems you have inadvertently wandered into a raw beef restaurant.

Fear not, for Daegu's mungtigi (raw beef) is the best in our fair land.

The secret to this recipe lies in the removal of fats and sinew to get the perfect texture and softness. You will find it hard to believe that you are chewing beef, with its consistency closer to tuna sashimi. Another secret is the marinade. Its garlic and pepper flavors are strong yet enhance the taste of the meat.

As this particular food is well loved by locals and tourists, family and friends often take it with soju on the side. In the Jeolla region, raw beef is often called "saeng-gogi" or "yuk-sasimi."

Where to get it: Songhak (송학)

Tel: (053) 762-0547

Address: Daegu, Suseong-gu, Sang-dong 70-2

Hours: 12:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m.

It seems you have inadvertently wandered into a raw beef restaurant. Fear not, for Daegu's mungtigi is the best in our fair land.

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FOOD & DRINK

Edited by Matthew Lamers / matlamers@groovekorea.com



Galbijim

Spicy beef stew

The next popular food is galbijim (spicy beef stew). Restaurants in Galbijim Alley still use the same recipes they did in the 1970s and still serve their fare in nickel-silver pots. They use the pots because the thin metal heats very quickly, which is said to maintain the tenderness of the meat. But the best part of the meal is not the main course, but what comes after it. Your empty pot is returned to you with bibimbap (a mix of rice and vegetables), the perfect conclusion to a meal. Wash it down with a bottle of soju.

Where to get it: Galbijim Alley

Address: Daegu, Jung-gu, Dongin-dong 1-ga



Napjak mandu

Flat dumplings

Another of Daegu's favorite foods is napjak mandu (flat dumplings), which was introduced in our January issue. The restaurant Miseongdang near the Seomun Market subway station invented napjak mandu 48 years ago. Now it is one of the most popular foods in Daegu.

This mandu takes its form due to the ingredients, which were the cheapest the restaurant could find after the conclusion of the 1950-53 Korean War. The recipe remains unchanged today. I recommend trying this mandu with jjolmyeon (a spicy noodle variation).

Where to get it: Misungdang

Tel: (053) 255-0742

Address: Daegu, Jung-gu, Namsan 4-dong 104-13

Hours: 8:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m.



Foreign food

Philly cheesesteak, Australian food

105 South St. Grill is known for its Philly cheesesteak. Philadelphia native and chef/owner Brandon opened its doors in 2009, importing the recipe from his neighborhood, where most of his clients were Italians. He searched high and low for the right bakery before finally finding what he was looking for in Seoul. Now he has fresh bread delivered to Daegu daily from the capital.

What: 105 South St. Grill

Tel: (053) 471-7867

Address: Daegu, Nam-gu, Bongduk 3-dong 664-10

Hours: 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Another famous restaurant at Suseong-gu is the Australian restaurant G'day. It originally opened in 2006 and moved to the current location last year. While chef/owner Kwon Yeong-joo was living in Australia, her sister "Geenie" paid her a visit and fell in love with the culture. The sisters decided to open a café in Daegu to represent the vibe they experienced in Australia. When they first opened up shop, they could not track down a local maker of focaccia bread, so Geenie earned her baker's license and now makes it herself. 🍞

What: G'day

Tel: (053) 746-1217

Address: Daegu, Suseong-gu, Suseong-dong 4-ga 980-9

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Seung-yeup Lee



Sung-koog Jung



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Lunch Time: 12:30pm-2:00pm

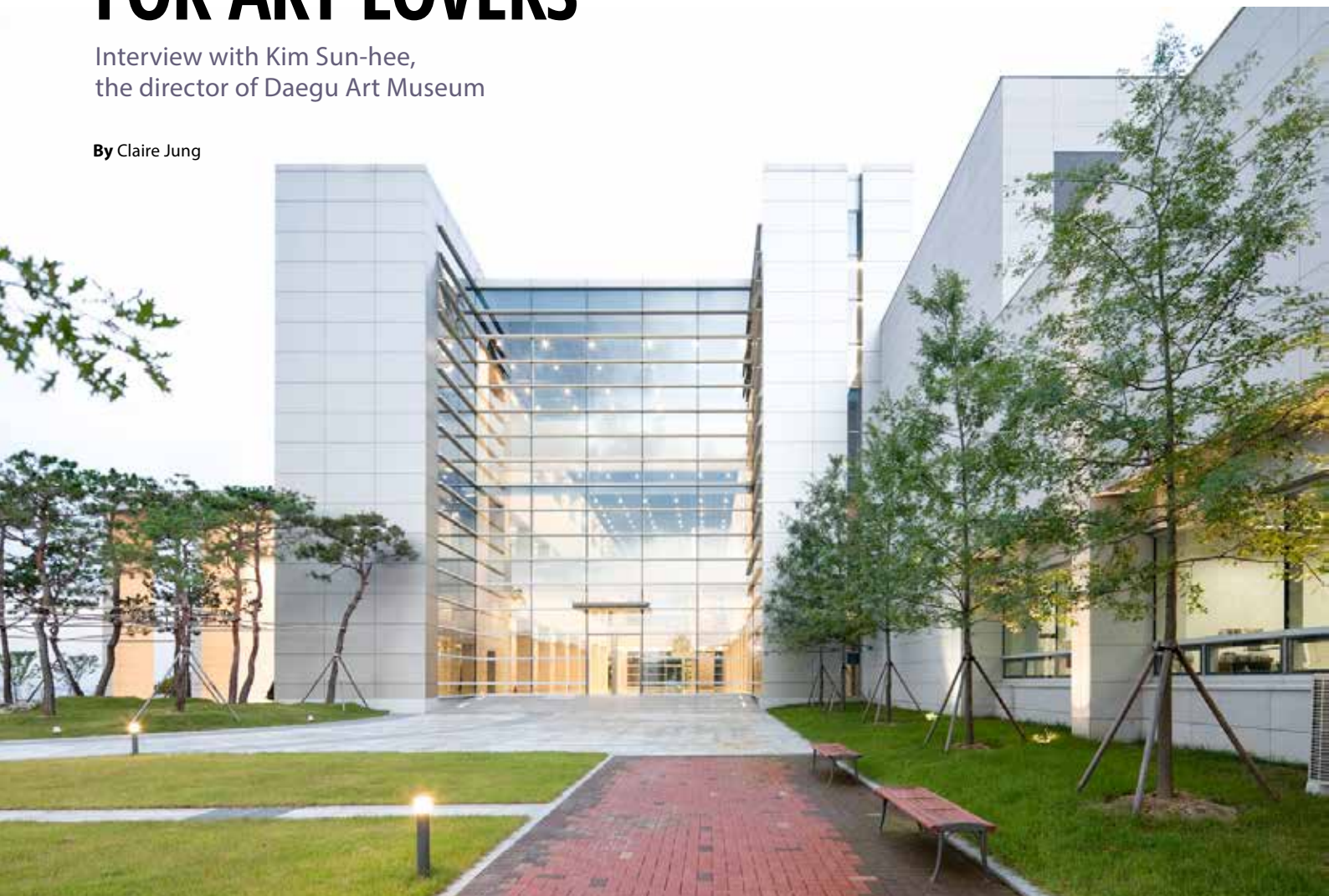
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OPEN SPACE FOR ART LOVERS

Interview with Kim Sun-hee,
the director of Daegu Art Museum

By Claire Jung



“I hope the museum can be an open and healing space for those who appreciate art.”

● Daegu Art Museum stands out from the city's traditional character. The three-story structure's panoramic windows represent modernity and openness. Its five exhibition halls are designed to maximize continuity. Most of all, wide-open spaces provide a level of comfort that is conducive to almost limitless contemplation.

The museum opened its doors in May 2011 and struggles to attract crowds. But considering the magnificent artwork in these corridors, it seems only a matter of time before the museum gets the attention it deserves.

Everything in this museum is the result of the vision of newly appointed director Kim Sun-hee.

For a museum director, she's a bit of an anomaly. Kim has lived the life of a globetrotter, having vast experience throughout Asia. She shuns bureaucracy. Her experiences as curator at Mori Art Museum in Tokyo and director of the Chinese Contemporary Art Awards and Shanghai Zendai Group Himalayan Center have served as a foundation for her new and inventive direction.

Until the late 1970s, Daegu competed with Seoul to

be the center of Korea's art scene. But when the mainstream shifted to installation art in the 1980s, the city's conservative character hindered its artistic advancement.

Despite the fact that the city has cultivated renowned artists such as Choi Jung-hwa, Park Tae-jun, Lee Sang-hwa and Lee In-sung, most people remain in the dark on the significant role Daegu has played in the art community over the decades.

Because of that, Kim's vision involves the promotion of local talent and the revival of Daegu's reputation. But she's also keen to show renowned international artists.

She is currently involved in exhibits for Kusama Yayoi and DNA x Kabbala. The Kusama Yayoi exhibition is organized by Daegu Art Museum and will tour Taiwan, Shanghai and Seoul. The exhibition will showcase more than 100 pieces of the internationally renowned artist, including 30 new paintings. Whereas the Kusama Yayoi exhibit introduces the global trendsetter to locals, the DNA x Kabbala exhibition promotes Korean artists to the world. DNA, which stands for “design and art” in this



Until the late 1970s, Daegu competed with Seoul to be the center of Korea's art scene. But when the mainstream shifted to installation art in the 1980s, the city's conservative character hindered its artistic advancement.

case, will feature the works of 10 Korean artists. It involves everything from furniture designs to sculptures.

"The DNA exhibition is designed to deliver a message that art is applied in many forms of our daily lives," said Kim.

In the coming year, Daegu Art Museum will play host to "Exchange between foreign and local artists," "Seminars by foreign artists" and "Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai Residency programs for young artists."

Gallery brochures are written in three languages: English, Japanese and Chinese.

Kim's openness is projected in the management of the museum. Daegu Art Museum maintains an open door policy for local artists. So long as the nature of a potential exhibit aligns with the museum's direction and schedule, the museum makes space available to artists in the area.

"I hope the museum can be an open and healing space for those who appreciate art," said Kim. 📺

GETTING THERE:

A free shuttle bus to the museum is available every 30 minutes from exit 5 of Daegu Grand Park Station, line 2.

Address: 706-190, Daegu-si Suseong-gu Samdeok-dong 374

MORE INFORMATION:

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24 HOURS IN KYOTO

Getting the most out of a layover

Column by Travis Allen

● Layover. For travelers, the word can conjure up images of utter despair: assuming the fetal position to attempt sleep in chairs that drive steel poles into your limbs. Drinking more cups of coffee than what should be humanly possible. Long hours gazing out of the window at the planes taking off. Looking down at your watch to realize what felt like an hour was only in fact five excruciating minutes. I must admit that this horrid imagery used to be my layover reality. As a budget traveler, it always seemed to make sense to stay in the airport rather than venture out. However, after staving off insanity one too many times, I began to realize how much one can do with a short amount of time in one location.

This was my mission as I set forth on a recent trip to Kyoto: to demonstrate how much can be seen, eaten and accomplished in less than 24 hours. The idea of traveling round-trip from Seoul to Osaka to Kyoto for such a short duration left many people I spoke with dumbstruck and wanting to know why I would bother wasting my time. Unwavering in my drive to prove the naysayers wrong, my girlfriend and I boarded our flight at Incheon, determined to maximize our short window of time in Japan.

Once we arrived in Osaka, I quickly spotted the enormous queue of helpless souls lined up to purchase train tickets into Kyoto from an agent. Seeing that the line was at a virtual standstill, and with the next train for the city departing in 15 minutes, I confidently approached the gargantuan ticket-is-suing machine. I felt certain that after years of successfully navigating the streets of Seoul, this feeble piece of machinery would be a cakewalk. Oozing with confidence, I purchased the ticket and proceeded to hand it over to the ticket agent, only to be informed that I had in fact purchased something along the lines of a "half ticket." Rather than sending me with my tail between my legs in my shamed state back to the agent (and subsequently missing my train), she settled for laughing at my expense and let us onto the train, albeit with the express instructions to purchase the other "half ticket" en route to Kyoto. Certainly not the opti-

mal start, but at least we were headed in the right direction.

Despite the initial feeling of embarrassment, the rest of the ride proceeded smoothly, and we arrived in Kyoto without further event. When I first arrive to a new place, I always find it interesting to ponder what formulates a first impression. I suppose that it is unavoidable when first setting foot on foreign soil to compare what you see to what you know, and for me the "know" is Seoul. The observation I immediately made was of the sheer cleanliness of the city, which left me utterly taken aback. Trees strewn throughout the city in abundance? More people riding bicycles than in cars? Where are all the smokers? (I later found out that in 2007 Kyoto passed a law banning smoking on the street.) This is urban Asia for God's sake -- what the hell was going on?

Kyoto is a city for the wanderer. Certainly, one could spend days exploring the rich cultural and historical heritage that the city has to offer, but for my money the best option was to grab a hotel in the center of the city and simply explore, as the city offers treasures at seemingly every turn. Although this was our underlying plan, there were a few things we had no intention of missing.

When you are fortunate enough to travel frequently, particularly in Asia, you inevitably become somewhat jaded regarding historical monuments. However, any hesitation was immediately alleviated as I found myself wandering through the shrine of Fushimi Inari Taisha. I gazed in awe as the hue of the structures transitioned to an increasingly fiery orange amid the blazing glow of the setting sun, seemingly setting fire to this exquisite testament to the beauty of historical architecture.

After leaving the shrine completely awestruck, we proceeded onward to have dinner in Gion, the most exclusive and popularized geisha district in all of Japan. Gion at night is nothing short of magical. The tiny streams that meander through the small alleys shimmer. The cedar panels of the buildings feel as though they are coming alive in the pale glow of the lantern light, while shadows dance mis-



*Trees strewn throughout the city in abundance?
More people riding bicycles than in cars? Where are
all the smokers? This is urban Asia for God's sake --
what the hell was going on?*



chievously about, tricking the eyes and adding to the already exorbitant amount of mystique surrounding the area.

Amid this wonder, it's easy to become lost and feel as though on some ethereal level you are connected with the city itself. After gorging ourselves on a phenomenal teppanyaki meal, washed down with some obligatory delectable Japanese beers, we found ourselves twisting through endless winding corridors until the next thing we knew, we were the only human souls in sight.

Out of the darkness we heard the soft pitter-patter of wooden shoes. We turned in time to see a young woman in traditional geisha clothing and makeup quietly duck into a side street. Excitedly, we turned to follow the apparition, and finally after some time we caught up to her.


Generally I am quite comfortable asking to take people's photos while traveling, but I must admit it took all the gall I could muster to respectfully request her permission. With a juxtaposed look of shyness mixed with confidence, she quietly nodded her consent, adding that I take "one photo only." Afterwards, I felt like I had met a celebrity, and we jubilantly continued in the opposite direction from the geisha. We spent a few more hours lost amid the majestic wonder of the city before arriving exhaustedly back at the hotel for a few quick hours of sleep.

The next day we only had a short time before our train back to Osaka, and I'd be damned if I was going to come to Japan and not eat at one of the top sushi restaurants in the city. As we entered the restaurant, the familiar sounds of the conveyor belt clicking away and sharp knives falling on cutting boards greeted me. We grabbed a table and began to eat, trying to pace ourselves but realiz-

ing early on the fallacy of this strategy. My eye focused on the prize, I began to look around in unabashed shame at the other patrons, slowly eating away at two or three plates of sushi before paying the bill. Turning back, I saw my stack of plates gradually turning to mountains in front of my eyes. The chef continually offered up arrays of mouthwateringly diverse fish, many of which were previously unknown to me. To hell with moderation -- it was me versus uni, and that sea urchin roe never stood a chance.

With the clock rapidly ticking until our departure, we had time for a few more of those exquisite Japanese beers before racing back to the JR Station for our return train to Osaka. I figured I would give my return "half ticket" another go-round, but after a 15-minute awkward interchange that resulted in the ticket agent repeatedly asking me, "OK, when you go?" and ending in utter confusion, I raced to the office to buy a ticket, barely stepping onto the train before it pulled away from the station.

All told, I would deem this "intentional layover" a smashing success, clear evidence that there is far more one can do with limited time in a city than hang out at the airport with the other zombies. Kyoto itself is a city of wonder, an immaculate combination of rich historical tradition mixed with the urban sprawl of contemporary Japan, resulting in a center of culture, cuisine, and personality.

With reasonable flights currently available from Seoul to Osaka, if you haven't experienced Kyoto firsthand, there's no better time to visit than now. 

IN PRAISE OF WALKING

Stop fighting the crowds and wander lazily along the street

Story by Jenna Davis / Photos by Maxwell Wright



Lights linger from a lone car passing through the deserted streets after la passeggiata.



The facade of Orvieto's famous gothic cathedral towers seven stories above the narrow streets.



● At 6:15 p.m. the narrow cobblestone streets are choked with people moving at a snail's pace. I clutch my empty shopping bag and try to calculate how long it will take to reach the grocery store, purchase the necessary ingredients for the pasta dinner I had planned, and make it back home through the crowd. I crane my neck around the cluster of dark-haired Italian men in front of me, wondering why the streets are suddenly so crowded after being empty for hours.

I didn't realize it then, but at that moment I was caught in "la passeggiata," or evening stroll, a daily ritual that has refined the simple act of walking into an art form with one major goal: to socialize with friends, family, neighbors and anyone else you might bump into along the way.

In 2006, I was a sophomore in college and a new arrival to Orvieto, the stunning hilltop town I would call home for a semester. Orvieto is located in the middle of the Umbrian countryside in central Italy and epitomizes the classic small Italian town, complete with crumbling buildings, feral cats prowling rooftops and clothes fluttering in the breeze on laundry lines. And like most small Italian cities, Orvieto has honed and crafted the walking ritual to perfection.

I learned that the passeggiata was born from "il riposo," or afternoon nap — a period of a few hours when many store owners closed up shop to eat lunch and relax, a concept I initially found bizarre and annoying. I couldn't go grocery shopping any time I wanted? I was a consumer with money to spend. What was this nonsense? I could just picture the shopkeepers all seated around a large table, spooning thick, hand-rolled pasta onto each other's plates, sipping red wine at three in the afternoon and snickering about my sense of entitlement.

When the stores reopened in the evening, locals flooded the streets to do their grocery shopping—often hand-in-hand or linked arm-in-arm—in a congenial parade of chatter, flirtation and shameless gossip. Thus, la passeggiata.

I quickly realized that walking without the goal of exercise or arriving at a particular destination at a particular time was delightful. People stopped what they were doing every evening just to stroll, shop and reflect on their day. Those crafty Italians had transformed the mundane task of grocery shopping into something romantic and artful. I was sold.

I learned to stop fighting the crowds and wander lazily along the street with everyone else, watching the day's dramas retold in a collision of vowels and exaggerated hand motions.

In Orvieto, everyone seems to emerge at the time

when the air smells like burning leaves and make their way down Corso Cavour, the main street that snakes through the hilltop town. Mothers with grocery bags push strollers and corral their older children who walk the dogs. Women brave the cobblestone in their stilettos and invite the curious and hungry stares of young men. Eventually the walk thins out in the Piazza della Repubblica, where you can find old men sporting walking sticks and fedoras, immersed in their own form of gossip on park benches.

By about 8:30 p.m. the streets are eerily quiet and deserted, aside from the familiar blanket of fog that seems to creep in when there's a chill to the air. The street signs are barely visible, the only light coming from the windows of occupied dining rooms. And if you listen closely, the clinking of dishes and the faint sound of fork scraping plate can be heard. It's like the passeggiata had been imagined.

People stopped what they were doing every evening just to stroll, shop and reflect on their day. Those crafty Italians had transformed the mundane task of grocery shopping into something romantic and artful.

Now as a resident of Seoul, the walking ritual truly seems like a distant memory belonging to someone else, or a scenario I had once seen in some cliché film. If the concept of a leisurely walk seemed foreign when I first moved to Italy, my move to Korea made me feel even further removed from the peaceful tradition. A leisurely stroll with frequent stops around 6 p.m. in downtown Seoul might get you mowed over by fellow pedestrians or earn you a sharp elbow to the ribs.

Italy and Korea couldn't be more opposite, but I find myself thinking about the boot-shaped country more than ever while in Korea, simply because it is the only other country in which I've spent a substantial amount of time. But when a western European country is your measuring stick and you live in East Asia, the assessments become tricky. It's best to forget comparisons and do as the Romans do, wherever you are.

In Seoul I'll perfect my ability to power walk and dodge pedestrians. But in Italy? I'll stroll languidly down the vicoli with a wine buzz and a smile. 🍷

'BETRAYAL' TO HIT STAGE IN MARCH

White Box Theatre welcomes Seoul Shakespeare's
guest director Lindsay Higgins

By Anna Sebel / Photos by Liam Mitchinson

"It's a great story, and we're delighted to have someone with such a wealth of experience tell it."

—White Box
co-owner Liam
Mitchinson

● This spring, White Box Theatre welcomes guest director Lindsay Higgins of the group Seoul Shakespeare. A company renowned for dynamic and contemporary repertoire, the choice may seem unusual — but it won't be Shakespeare that Higgins plans to show audiences this March. The 30-year-old graduate of the University of Southern Maine is set to direct Harold Pinter's "Betrayal" — a surprisingly innovative story on the often-overworked subject of infidelity.

The story is told in reverse chronological order, spanning almost a decade. The first scene takes place after the affair has ended and

the final scene depicts the beginning of the affair, showing characters' innocent and naive sides. "It's a great story, and we're delighted to have someone with such a wealth of experience tell it," said White Box co-owner Liam Mitchinson.


Higgins will join an exclusive list of guest directors, including Stephen Glaspie (director of the critically acclaimed "Red Light Winter" and "Good People") and Quinn Olbrich, who brought audiences Edward Albee's classic "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf" in 2012. Higgins' experience in Seoul alone is impressive. She is head of the Seoul Theatre Collective and recently directed "Macbeth" and "The Tempest" for Seoul Shakespeare.

But Higgins insists she's not making a departure from her classic roots by directing a relatively contemporary play

at White Box. "Rather than a departure from anything, both Shakespeare and Pinter explore complicated relationships and detailed human desires," she said.

Higgins, having previously worked with casts of up to 20 actors, is also enjoying the luxury of exploring these themes with an intimate cast of just three, which originally drew her to the script.

Her previous experience will prove invaluable when the show goes into the final production weeks.

"Directing large Shakespearean casts have taught me invaluable time management skills and patience," she said. "I've learned that a director is only as good as their production team and to always know how your stage manager takes their coffee." 

MORE INFORMATION

Betrayal will be performed from March 15 to 24 in English with Korean subtitles.

TICKETS

All tickets are 15,000. Visit probationarytheatre.com.



Listings



International clubs in Seoul

To add your club to this list, e-mail mattlamers@groovekorea.com. — Ed.

Royal Asiatic Society

raskb@koreanet.net / www.raskb.com

This non-profit organization offers lectures about Korea's history and culture, while also arranging tours to locations throughout the country.

The Australia and New Zealand Association

events@anzakorea.com / www.anzakorea.com

Catch up with them at the Grand Hyatt Paris Bar from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on March 20. Members are charged 12,000 won. Non-members pay 17,000 won.

The British Association of Seoul

basseoul@yahoo.co.uk / www.britishseoul.com

BASS is a vibrant and active social group for British expatriates and all nationalities. We seek to enhance our members' experience in Seoul, and provide hope and financial assistance to Korean charities in need.

Seoul International Women's Association

president@siwapage.com / www.siwapage.com

SIWA is open to women of all nationalities. Its monthly Coffee Mornings are held the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Among its many other activities are twice-yearly classes for members by members referred to as Interest Groups.

Busan International Women's Association

biwadove@yahoo.co.uk / www.biwakorea.com

This association extends friendship and support to international women living in the Busan-Kyungsang-Namdo area. The group meets at Starbucks opposite the Busan Aquarium on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Members and non-members are welcome.

Seoul Writers Workshop

seoulwriters@gmail.com / seoulwriters.wordpress.com

SWW members meet every two weeks in order to read and critique each other's work. The aim is to provide opinions and constructive criticism. Work is distributed before workshops.

Helping Others Prosper through English

bedavinci@naver.com / www.alwayshope.or.kr

HOPE's goals are to empower children through education and to open doors of opportunity for tomorrow's leaders. HOPE is one of the largest volunteer-based foreigner organizations in Korea and is comprised of both foreign and Korean staff.

KOTESOL

www.kotesol.org

Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages is a professional organization for teachers of English. Our main goals are to assist members in their self-development, and improve ELT in Korea.

Overseas Chinese Women's Club

<http://ocwckr.wordpress.com>

This club meets monthly and is open to anyone interested in learning about Chinese culture and making new friends. Conversation is in Mandarin.

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(NEARLY) FREE K-POP, BEAUTY, CRAFT CLASSES

Interview with Yang Sun-young, the general manager
at Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center

By Claire Jung



Crafts



K-pop dance



Eishu Beauty Class



Yang Sun-young, general manager at Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center

● The Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center is starting to gain attention for the innovative way in which it is helping expats in the city acclimatize to their new environment: Rather than telling them what they need, the center is receptive to their demands.

The center has practical functions such as helping expats navigate daily problems they encounter. There are also cultural experience programs to enhance the understanding of Korean traditions and modern daily life.

However, it's the other programs that are getting the most praise. Global Talk is a language exchange program; there is a traditional painting program; dance classes to learn to dance like a K-pop star; K-beauty classes to learn the ins and outs of using Korean cosmetics; K-Style to learn about hair styling; and K-Drum to learn how to mix contemporary music with traditional Korean musical instruments.

The Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center also offers spaces to small or large groups free of charge.

Groove Korea sat down with the general manager at Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center, Yang Sun-young, to talk about the center and its offerings.

Why was the Seoul Global Culture & Tourism Center established?

The Seoul city government and Jung-gu Office founded the center in March 2009 to provide information to tourists and to cater its services to various expat communities.

What services does the center provide?

We have two spaces that we offer to people at no cost to them. Haechi Hall was originally built as a profit-motivated enterprise to hold performances or concerts. However, last year we changed course and decided to offer the space to expat communities for free. Since then, multicultural families and expat communities have used the space for festivals, Christmas parties and photo exhibitions.

We also offer seminar rooms for smaller activities. They're used by a wide variety of people, including those from Myanmar, Mongolia, Russia, Japan, and the Seoul International Women's Association. They use the facility for Korean language learning, reading clubs and private parties.

How does one go about renting the spaces?

You can download a form from our website and submit the application online. Or you can just call or email us. If your meeting is for non-commercial purposes and the space is available for the time you requested, we will process your request

immediately. The cost is free for expat communities and we only charge Koreans. This is because the center is tasked by Seoul city government to provide services foreigners.

Could you tell us in more detail about the programs?

Global Talk is a language exchange program that operates from 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. You can apply for a language or cultural exchange, and the center will match you with a partner. You can also use our facility.

The traditional painting program runs every Thursday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. A professional lecturer from Folk Painting Foundation conducts the Korean traditional painting class. All materials and preparations will be provided by the center, meaning it's totally free of charge. As this program has been very popular among foreigners, we are planning to launch an advanced diploma.

K-pop Dance Season 1 is every Wednesday from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. through March and April. This is the most popular program at the center. Our professional dance instructors teach the choreography of Korean singers at Haechi Hall. Due to its popularity, we can only accept 40 people. First come, first serve. This is a paid program and the fee is 2,000 won per session and 10,000 won for the entire eight-session program.

Do you have any upcoming programs?


We are organizing K-Beauty (a cosmetic class), K-Style (hairstyling class), K-Drum (contemporary music with the use of traditional Korean musical instruments) and Taekwondo. You can check our updates on our website and our facebook.

Perhaps the most useful class for newcomers will be the Culture View program. It will provide you with very useful tips for use on a daily basis, like how to use public transportation, how to open up a bank account and how to apply for a driver's license. The program will help you navigate small problems you encounter every day.

What is a Foreign Community Customized program?

All the programs can be customized upon request by a group of applicants. A group can apply for one or more programs at a time and when the program is offered can be adjusted to meet the applicant's schedule.

What is your long-term vision?

Besides the aforementioned regular programs, we are developing seasonal events and lectures to support the understanding of Korean culture for foreigners and to improve our services. 

Category	Program	Length	Fee (won/person)
Paid	K-pop dance	90 mins.	5.000
	K-pop singing	60 mins.	3.000
	Taekwondo dance	90 mins.	5.000
	Traditional crafts	60 mins.	TBD
	Others	TBD	5.000
	Traditional Korean clothes (hanbok)	TBD	3.000
Free	Crafts	40 mins.	

MORE INFO

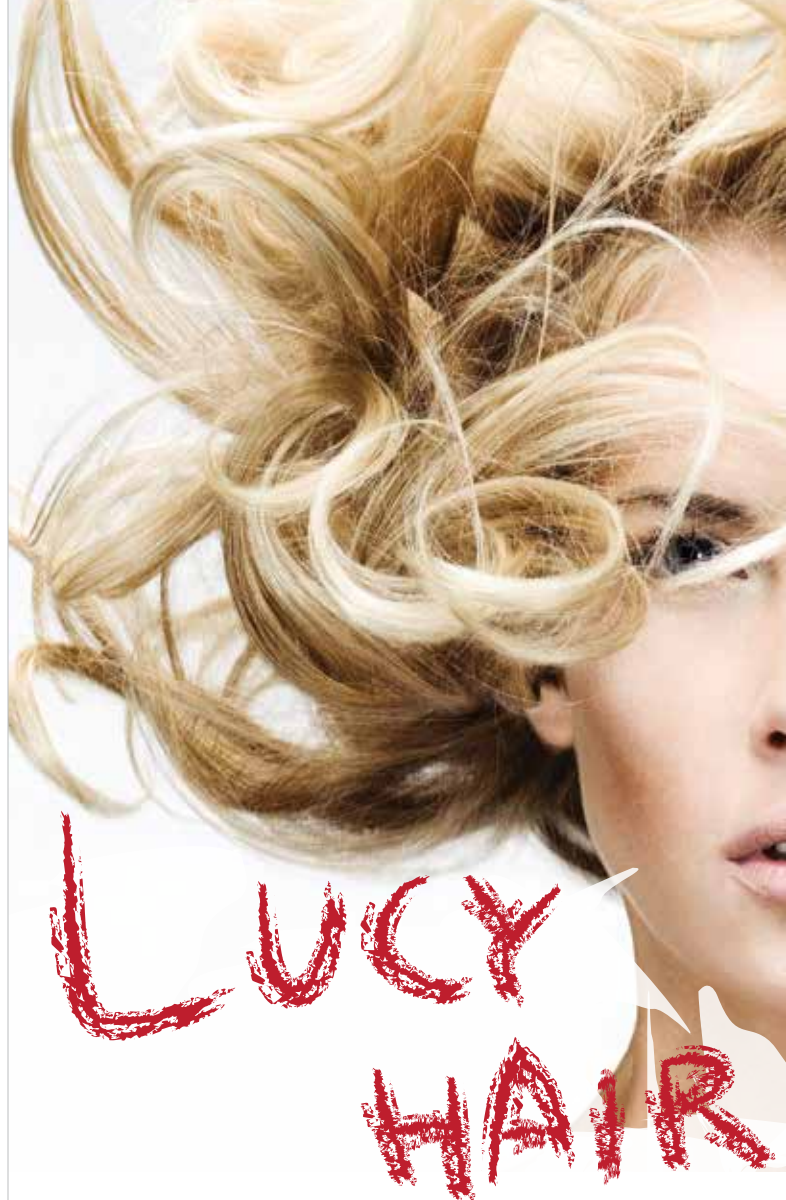
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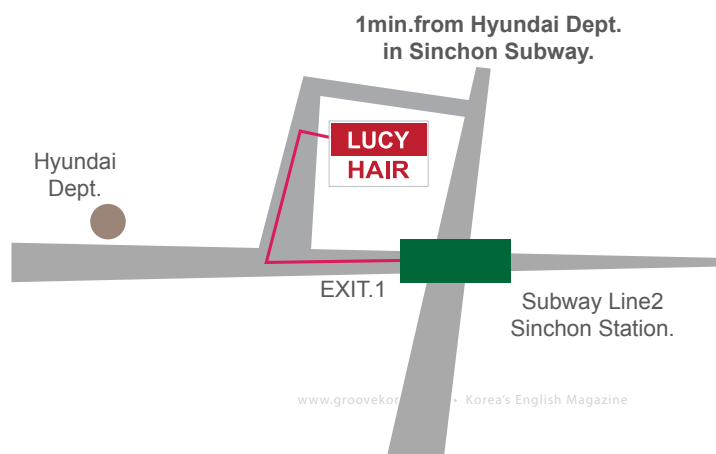
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**SEONG TAEK KIM, D.D.S., Ph.D.**

Associate Professor at College of Dentistry, Yonsei University
Post Doctoral Program at School of Dentistry, UCLA
Diplomate, American Board of Orofacial Pain
Korean Dental License

TEMPOROMANDIBULAR DISORDERS EXPLAINED

40-75% of people have TMD;
if you do, too, here's what to do

● Temporomandibular disorders (TMDs) are not always indicative of a severe condition. Sometimes they improve on their own, without the help of any kind of treatment. But if you want to go to a dentist who has specialty in orofacial pain and oral medicine, fear not.

Here's how to Self-test for temporomandibular disorders

Bend three fingers and place the middle knuckle between your upper and lower front teeth. If you can do this without any discomfort or pain, you might have no jaw problems. Pay careful attention to any pain around the jaw and during chewing or yawning. If there is any discomfort you should see a dentist who has specialty in orofacial pain and oral medicine.

TMDs include joint disorders and masticatory muscle disorders. Joint disorders can be subdivided into three categories: derangements of the condyle-disc complex, structural incompatibilities of the articular surfaces, and inflammatory disorders of the joint. It would seem that a conservative estimate of the percentage of people in the general U.S. population with some type of TMD ranges between 40-75 percent.

Main symptoms of joint disorders are a clicking sound when the mouth opens, limitation of mouth opening (locking) and joint pain. Masticatory muscle disorders have muscular pain as symptom.

Surgery is sometimes conducted to repair or reconstruct joints, but it is not always best way to treat TMDs. According to epidemiologic studies, over 30 percent of people experience joint clicking sounds. It is important to note that a long-term study (conducted over three decades) showed that joint clicking sounds are not as severe a con-

dition as people once thought. If you experience only a clicking sound without pain or a limitation of mouth opening, it probably isn't necessary to seek treatment. It is recommended to go to see specially trained dentists for a proper diagnosis. Additional tests, including X-rays, CT, and MRI may be necessary to evaluate joint and muscle conditions.

Chronic masticatory muscle pain can cause headaches, and treating this muscle problem is key to eliminating such headaches in this case. Thus, if the patient had visited a neurologist for a diagnoses but no problem was discovered, it is recommended that the patient visit a dentist to be evaluated for masticatory muscles.

There are two types of treatments that begin with an accurate diagnosis: reversible and irreversible. Reversible treatments include behavioral control, exercise, moist hot pack, physical therapy, medication and splint therapy. These treatments can be adopted at the same time or gradually. Surgery can be performed if there is no improvement.

To prevent jaw problems, it is recommended to avoid crunchy and chewy food, chewing gum and taking large bites. Sometimes patients who grind their teeth develop muscle pain on both sides of their cheek area.

In this case, occlusal splint (night-use mouthpiece) could help to reduce pain. It is helpful to take anti-inflammatory drugs and muscle relaxants for severe pain.

Resting the chin on your hand, cradling the telephone against the shoulder, using a computer with a forward-leaning posture are examples of bad habits that could cause muscle pain. Maintaining good posture is important to prevent TMDs. 📱

The views expressed in this column do not represent those of Groove Korea. Always seek professional medical advice. — Ed.

For further dentistry information or reservations, please call Ms.Aeri Jo, the English coordinator at Yonsei University Dental Hospital.

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PADDY POWER

STRIKES IN SEOUL

Thousands expected for St. Patrick's Day Festival at Sindorim D-Cube

Story by Shauna Browne / **Photos courtesy** Tom Coyner

● St. Patrick's Day Festivals in Seoul have attracted north of 10,000 revelers in recent years, and this year's celebration at Sindorim D-Cube on March 16 looks to top that.

Organized by the Irish Association of Korea, the 2013 St. Patrick's Day festival will provide music, dancing and the opportunity to celebrate Ireland's most unique cultural event from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Irish Ambassador to Korea, Eamonn McKee, explained some of the reasons for the rising awareness of Irish culture in Korea. "Emigrants from Ireland are very adventurous. Numbers of Irish have gone from 500 three years ago to over 900 today. This means a growing membership for Irish clubs and a boost for demonstrations of Irish culture," he said. "This year marks three significant anniversaries. It is 80 years since the Irish missionaries arrived from the Columban Order, 60 years since the end of the Korean War, in which the Irish fought and

died, and 30 years since we established diplomatic relations."

The IAK strives to bring something fresh to each St. Patrick's Day festival, which enjoys a long tradition in Seoul. This year's event is aimed at both encouraging families to enjoy and experience a great Irish festival while also increasing awareness of Irish culture. While there is no parade this year, the facility at D-Cube has been expanded and the festival will see the introduction of an Irish village, where people can participate in a range of activities from food tasting to Irish dancing. The main stage will be home to bands who will perform live Irish music and dancing throughout the day.

Several bands, of both traditional and modern Irish music, will take the stage to perform music from bands such as the Chieftains. Myrwanwy Birds, an Irish musician who has been attending St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Seoul, said the festival is a great way to connect with Irish



"This year marks three significant anniversaries. It is 80 years since the Irish missionaries arrived from the Columban Order, 60 years since the end of the Korean War, in which the Irish fought and died, and 30 years since we established diplomatic relations."

— Irish Ambassador to South Korea,
Eamonn McKee

culture. "The Irish are known for their fun spirit and the festival is a chance to reach a hand into the Irish community."

Irish dancing will be a primary feature of the event. Irish step dancing is known for its fast pace and quick footwork. Irish dance troupe Tap Pung and Irish dancing teacher Olivia Houck will be available throughout the day in the Irish village to teach dance steps to people of all ages. The dancers will also perform on the main stage. Open stage dancing will be a feature; everyone is encouraged to join in, have some fun and learn Irish Ceili dancing.

Families can enjoy face painting, storytelling and the opportunity to try traditional Irish musical instruments. They include tin whistles, bodhrans, harps and fiddles. Irish traditional music will be played in the street throughout the day, and all musicians and singers are welcome to bring along their instruments and join in.

There are great cash prizes up for grabs in the costume competition, which is free to enter on the day. Participants should make costumes with a clear Irish theme. Flights to Dublin will be raffled off, courtesy of principal sponsor Ethiad Airways. Tickets can only be bought at the festival and cost 5,000 won (\$4.50) for one or 10,000 won for three.

St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in cities around the world every March. St. Patrick is one of Ireland's most recognized patron saints. La Fheile Padraig, as it is known in the Irish language, is a cultural celebration on the anniversary of his death. 🍀



GETTING THERE

Sindorim D-Cube city is located at Sindorim Station, exit 1.

MORE INFORMATION

Festivities will start from 12:30 p.m. on March 16 and continue until 5:30 p.m. For information on the official after party, go to www.groovekorea.com or www.iak.co.kr

HOOLEY

The IAK official Hooley venue is Bull & Barrel in Itaewon. Tickets cost 10,000 won at the door. There will be live entertainment.



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Club's website for more information.

www.flickr.com/groups/seoulphotoclub

Horoscopes

March 2013



Aries / March 20 - April 20

A co-worker tries to help you with a problem, but creates confusion instead. Don't get frustrated; it won't help. Just work together to resolve the problem. Love is in the air at the end of the month. A friend of a friend reveals his or her true feelings for you. Scorpio plays an important role.



Libra / September 24 - October 23

Seek harmony in the workplace this month. Don't become involved in an office disagreement. Family matters become hectic this month. Loved ones will look to you for advice and support. Take a deep breath. You'll be able to help everyone out and still have time for yourself.



Taurus / April 21 - May 21

Your tendency to keep quiet pays off in the beginning of the month. A close friend needs to talk and reveals personal information. Your confidence will be appreciated. When it comes to romance, you'll have to make a decision. Think about where you stand in that special relationship.



Scorpio / October 24 - November 22

Follow your instincts in the business world this month. It's your nature to tell the truth, so stick to it. Don't be tempted to embellish; it will backfire. Love takes center stage as the month draws to a close. An old friend will resurface and want to begin a relationship. Follow your heart.



Gemini / May 22 - June 21

Be patient at work this month. While your boss may seem too conservative for you, he or she really has your best interests at heart. You need to look out for yourself when it comes to your personal life. It will feel like everyone is against you. Be cautious when making decisions.



Sagittarius / November 23 - December 21

Be frank when a close friend asks for your opinion. While the truth may not be what he or she wants to hear, it's what he or she needs to hear. Your romantic life slows down this month, but don't get discouraged. This break will give you time to relax and focus on yourself.



Cancer / June 22 - July 22

Don't be the first to volunteer for a new project at work. Wait to see everything that's involved, because it may be more than you've bargained for. However, you should take a chance when it comes to romance. Don't wait for that intriguing person to ask you out. Make the first move.



Capricorn / December 22 - January 19

Now's your chance to shine at work. You'll be given the opportunity to lead a new project; your intelligence and efficiency will shine through. Don't be shy when it comes to meeting new people this month. Your sweet, sensitive side will endear you to someone with a lot of connections.



Leo / July 23 - August 23

Your sympathetic side will be called on early in the month. A loved one needs you to listen and give moral support. Be honest, but caring. Give in to your desires and shower yourself in luxury this month. It's going to be a hectic one at work, so you deserve to pamper yourself.



Aquarius / January 20 - February 18

Let your practical side lead you in your decision making as the month begins. It may seem like a good idea to make an impulsive purchase, but don't do it. Finances will be tight. A relationship moves into high gear when you realize how much you have in common with that special someone.



Virgo / August 24 - September 23

While you usually like to be alone, working as a team at work this month will make things so much easier. You'll share a lot of good ideas and actually make some close friends. Loved ones will rely on you to take care of a family matter. Aquarius is involved.



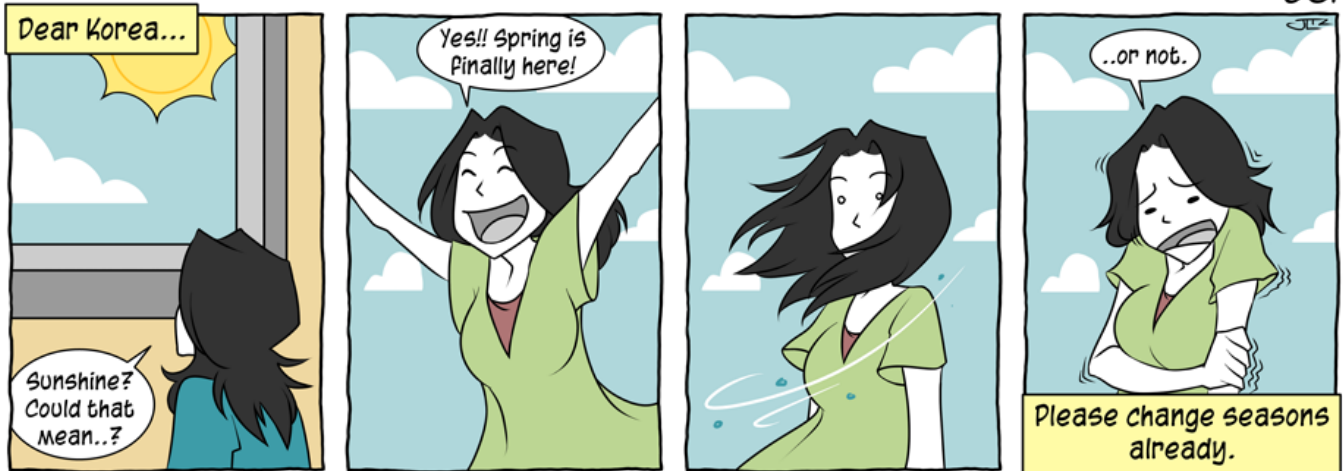
Pisces / February 19 - March 19

Slow down this month, because it will feel as if your entire world is closing in on you. A few days off of work will help you relax and time with loved ones will show you that you're still in control of your life. Virgo and Sagittarius play important roles.

Comics

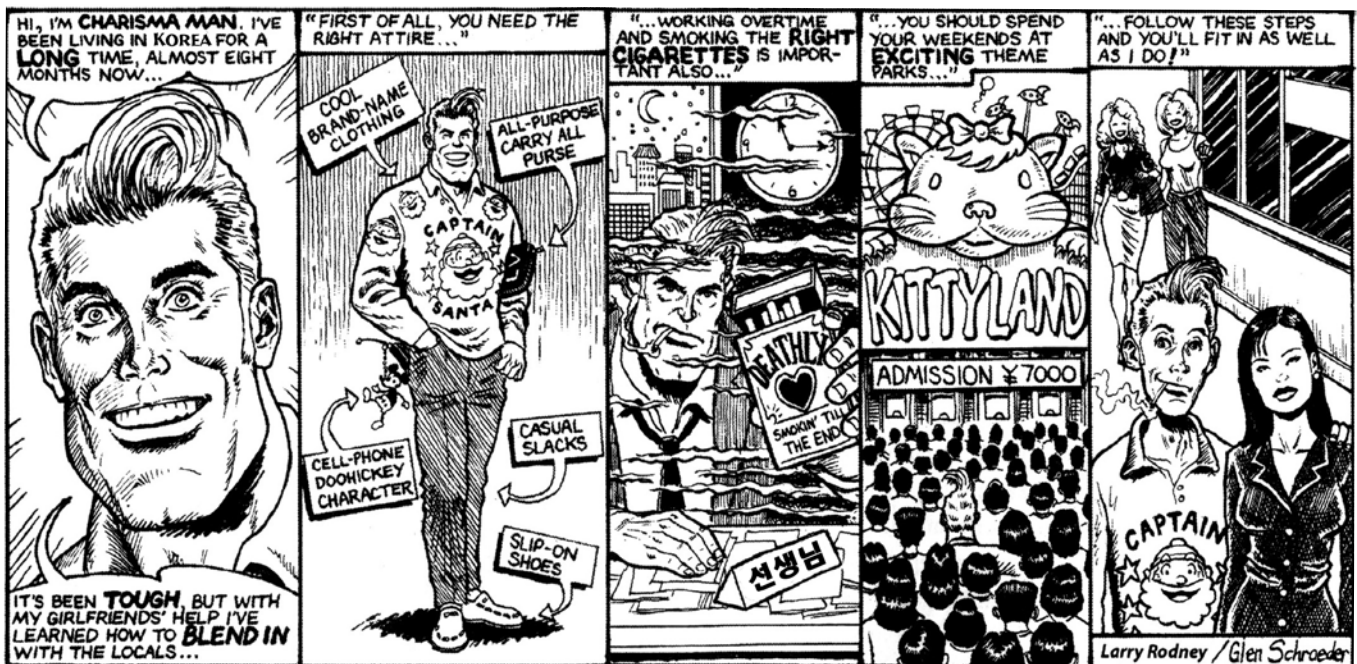
DEAR KOREA

061



[HTTP://DEARKOREACOMIC.COM](http://dearkoreacomix.com)

OFFICIALLY SICK OF THE COLD, JEN LEE



10:00PM

I should probably go to bed soon. That way, I won't be super tired at work tomorrow...



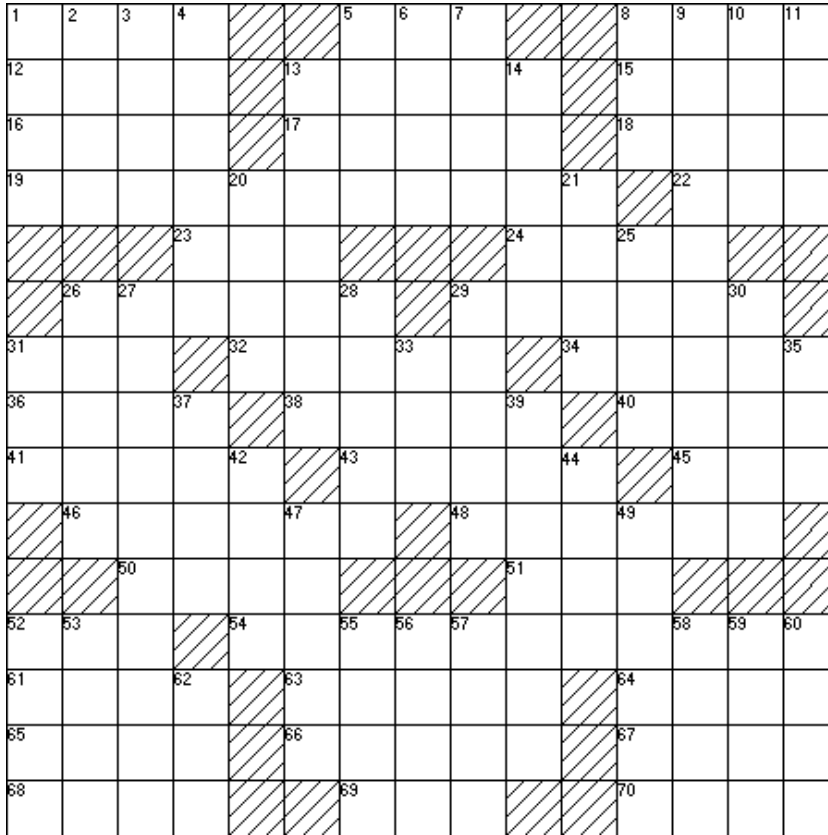
ROKETSHIP

by Luke Martin



Games

Crosswords - Sudoku



Across

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Courageous | 26. Alongside | 51. Even |
| 5. Droop | 29. Inclined troughs | 52. Garland of flowers |
| 8. Mid-months | 31. Journalist ____ Donaldson | 54. Noticeable |
| 12. Utiliser | 32. Handrail support post | 61. Greek god of love |
| 13. Underneath | 34. Armored war vehicles | 63. In the g_____ |
| 15. 1,000 | 36. US state | 64. Member of the lilly family |
| 16. Leave in panic | 38. Levees | 65. Dorsal members |
| 17. Abounding in foliage | 40. Coffin stand | 66. Undersides of feet |
| 18. Where the sun rises | 41. Male sex organ | 67. Not sharp |
| 19. Marine microorganism | 43. Salamanders | 68. Exam |
| 22. Reservoir or research (abbrev.) | 45. Pertaining to a deity | 69. Darken by sun exposure |
| 23. Male adult | 46. Disorderly or unkempt | 70. Aquatic carnivorous animal noted for its fur |
| 24. Throw | 48. A group of seven | |
| | 50. 3rd person plural | |

Down

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Afficionado | 25. Pierce | 49. Threesomes |
| 2. Norwegian city | 26. Someone who moderates or lessens | 52. Departed |
| 3. Ogle | 27. Emissions | 53. Great Lake |
| 4. Nightly visions | 28. Dallas' J.R. | 55. Tuber |
| 5. Observed | 29. Balls of yarn | 56. Beverage made from kola nuts |
| 6. Jai ____, sport | 30. Clay target | 57. Level, balanced or smooth |
| 7. A silly clown | 31. Dine | 58. Color of the sky |
| 8. President Eisenhower | 33. Supplement with difficulty | 59. Race car manufacturer |
| 9. A compound of arsenic | 35. ____ Lanka | 60. Scream |
| 10. Consequence | 37. Far above | 61. Super Sonic Transport |
| 11. Drunkards | 39. High plains | |
| 13. Made unable to see | 42. Pace | |
| 14. Painter of "Tenant Farmer" | 44. Argument | |
| Andrew ____ | 47. World's largest monolith, ____ Rock | |
| Principal | | |
| 21. Utter defeat | | |

3	1			2	9			
8		6			7	3		4
4								
7					5			
				6			7	9
	4	8				5		
	9	7		3				8
		3			2			7
						2	3	

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	3						2	4
4								3
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	1		2			6		
	7			1			9	
	6			2		9		
5		4						1
			5	8				

How to play

Sudoku requires no calculation or arithmetic skills. It is essentially a game of placing numbers in squares, using very simple rules of logic and deduction.

Objective

The objective of the game is to fill all the blank squares in a game with the correct numbers. There are three very simple constraints to follow. In a 9 by 9 square Sudoku game:

- Every row of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order.
- Every column of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order.
- Every 3 by 3 subsection of the 9 by 9 square must include all digits 1 through 9.

STARBUCKS

REVIVES MEANING OF LUNAR NEW YEAR

During the Lunar New Year holiday last month, Starbucks Korea employees supported Hope Baristas, in association with 16 local communities in Seoul, Daejeon, Gwangju and Jeju.

The company shared the holiday spirit with multicultural families, the Green Umbrella Dream Children's Orchestra and community welfare centers by donating daily necessities, winter clothes, stationary, coffee and even offered education for baristas.

"We prioritize returns to communities and seek sustainable methods to support them," said Lee Seok-gu, Star-

bucks Korea CEO. "And Hope Baristas is the first step to the realization of our goal."

In 2012, Starbucks Korea put in 24,182 hours together with more than 100 local communities in 50 cities.

The company has received commendations by more than 30 organizations, including the Seoul City Government, Ministry of Employment and Labor, The Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and Korea Employment Agency for the Disabled.



Park Hyatt Seoul

Park Club Spa

Park Club Spa presents the Namu Youth Tone body treatment that exfoliates dead skin cells and nourishes and moisturizes dry skin. The 60-minute session begins with a body scrub with Comfort Zone's Fruity Peel brand, followed by rinsing of the dead skin cells and oil massage which contains vitamin E, amaranth, grape, vanilla and rose oil. The program includes 20% special discount when purchasing Comfort Zone retail products and free access to the fitness studio, swimming pool and sauna located on the top floors of the hotel. The treatment is priced at KRW 175,000. Price is subject to 10% tax.

For information or reservations: (02) 2016-1176 / (02) 2016-1234



Sheraton Grande Walkerhill

Starwood Chef Charity Gala dinner at CLOCK16

The hotel's executive chefs of Starwood in Korea, the worldwide hotel chain company, will organize a gala dinner for the local charity. The very first dinner will open up at CLOCK16, Sheraton Grande Walkerhill on March 28th. For this meaningful gourmet event, 5 Starwood hotels in Korea hence Sheraton Grande Walkerhill, W Walkerhill, Sheraton Seoul D Cube City Hotel, Sheraton Incheon, and The Westin Chosun Busan will participate and the executive chefs will show up their very best culinary skills to collaborate a beautiful 6 course set dinner.

For information or reservations: (02) 450-6452



JW Marriott Hotel Seoul

Unlimited 'Cocktail Happy Hour'

The Exchange Bar at JW Marriott Hotel Seoul is set to launch an exciting new Happy Hour promotion, with unlimited cocktails on a different base every evening. The promotion will run from until the end of March, from 6pm to 9pm. Monday's Happy Hour cocktail base will be Gin, followed by Rum on Tuesday, Vodka on Wednesday, Tequila on Thursday and Whisky on Friday. All Happy Hour cocktails will be available on Saturday and Sunday. Cocktail Happy Hour offers a golden opportunity to enjoy unlimited cocktails for 28,000 won (included tax and service charge). Cocktails made using premium base liquors are available for an additional charge of just 5,000 won.v

For information or reservations: Exchange Bar (02) 6282-6739



Grand Hilton Seoul

25th anniversary packages

The Grand Hilton Seoul is offering guests a choice of three special spring packages to celebrate its 25th anniversary this year. The packages starts at 155,000won (tax and service charge exclusive) and include various benefits. All guests booking in for the packages gets a chance to win lucky draw with a prize of SM7 luxury sedan from Renault Samsung Motors, a plane ticket to Europe and international Hilton Voucher and more. The 25th guest booking for the package will be offered all services at only for 25,000 won (exclusive of tax and service charges).

Inquiries and reservations, (02) 2287-8440



Club Med Korea

Body and Soul

Club Med invites you to Club Med Bali and Cherating Beach for the Special 'Body and Soul: Four Colors in Four Days' event in 2013. Body & Soul is a health and wellness retreat designed to boost wellbeing and overall health through a series of activities on four color-themed days per session. All inclusive service includes return flights, comfortable and luxury rooms, worldwide and traditional cuisine, variety of sports and activities, and drinks at open bars. The price starts at 1,450,000 won and includes a special spa promotion.

For information or reservations: (02) 3442-0151



Lotte Hotel Busan

Spring refresher

Lotte Hotel Busan introduces three special packages combining 'Beauty' and 'Yummy' to welcome the spring season. The Picnic package includes Delica-Hans picnic box and a complimentary drink in a standard room. The Beauty package includes 140,000 won worthy of cosmetics set from Elizabeth Arden and breakfast for two guests at La Seine, the buffet restaurant, or in a room. The Yummy package is designed for guests preferring dinner instead of breakfast and also includes the cosmetics set. The packages are priced from 180,000 won to 290,000 won (exclusive of service charges and taxes). For information or reservations: (051) 810-1100.







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Inquiries, (051) 990-1234



Novotel Gangnam

"Spring Scent" Package

The scent of fresh flowers and a balmy breeze beckon the arrival of spring. Take in the warm sun and spend a leisurely spring day in the heart of the city. To celebrate the return of spring and the fun outings of the season, the Novotel Ambassador Gangnam now offers the "Spring Scent", a special package with a delicious lunchbox for a wonderful picnic. The package includes a one night's stay in a comfortable Deluxe Room, breakfast for two at the buffet restaurant "The Square" and a French-style lunchbox for two specially prepared by the hotel chefs. The package also offering free access to the swimming pool and fitness center as well as a 10% discount at the hotel restaurants is priced 239,000 won. Reservation inquiries, (02) 531-6521



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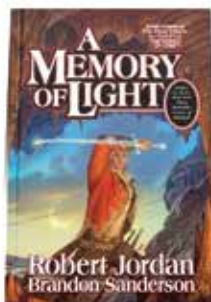
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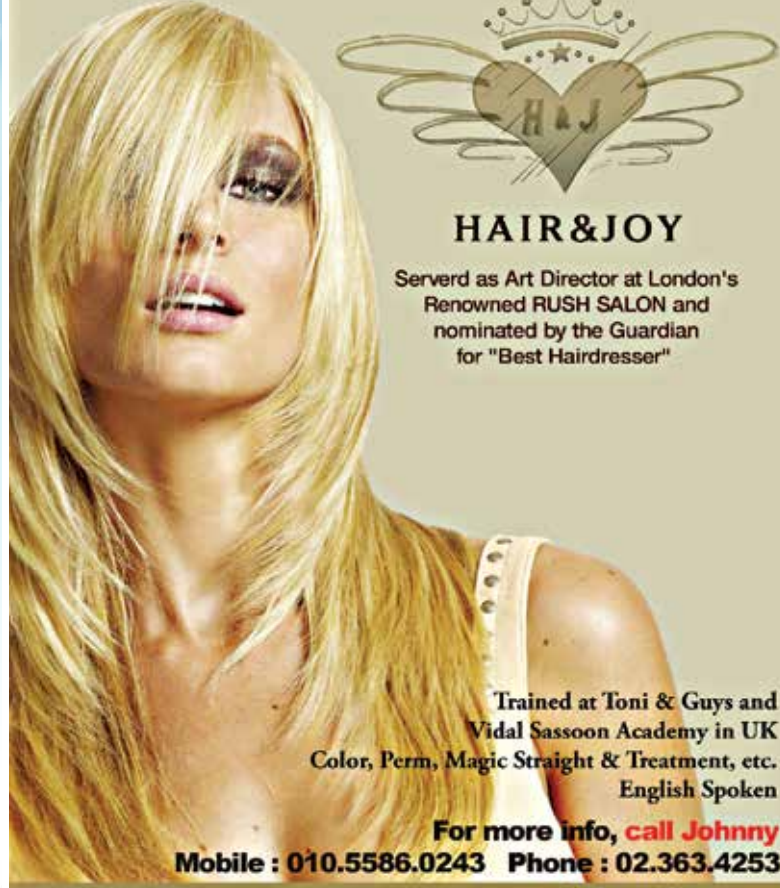
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DATE: March 16, 2013.

TIME: 12:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.
www.iak.co.kr
www.facebook.com/irishassociationofkorea

WIN: Cash prizes for best costumes (winners chosen at 4 p.m.)
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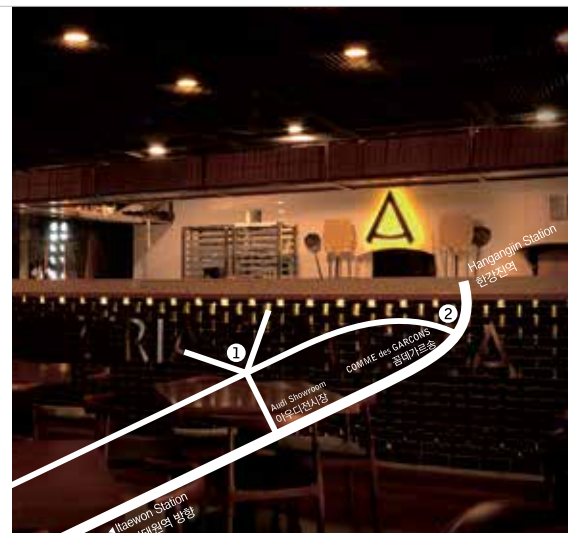
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